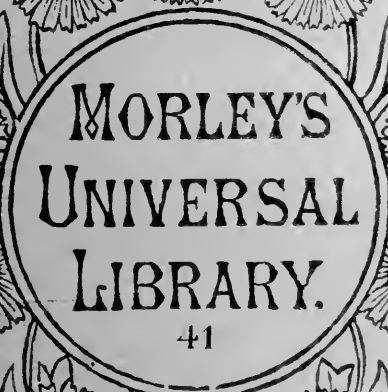




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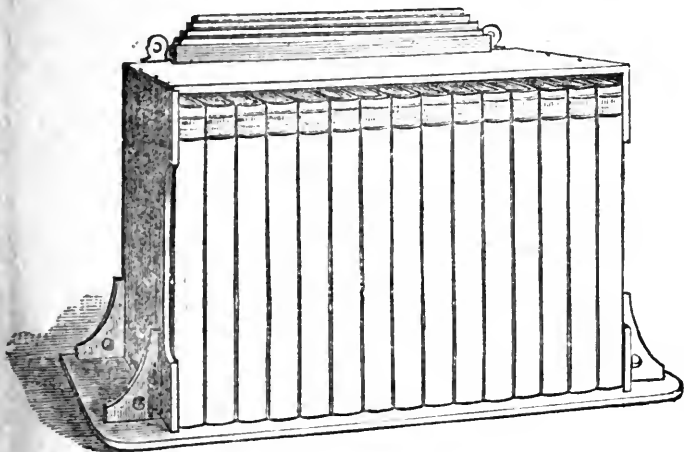
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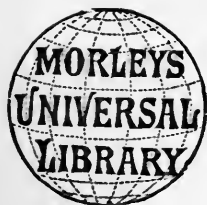
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OF  
ÆSCHYLUS

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH VERSE BY

ROBERT POTTER

*WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY HENRY MORLEY*

LL.D., PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH LITERATURE AT  
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## INTRODUCTION.



ÆSCHYLUS was born in the year 525 before Christ. He was born in Eleusis, a town of Attica, placed on a height near the sea, and opposite the island of Salamis. The river Cephissus flowed through the surrounding plain. Eleusis was a town sacred to the worship of Demeter (Latin, Ceres), Mother Earth, and her daughter Persephone (Proserpine) in whom Pluto took a share typical of the change from summer to winter in the seasons. From Athens to Eleusis there was a Sacred Way with monuments on either side of it, and a Temple of Apollo. Once a year a great procession travelled on that way from Athens to the celebration of the Eleusinian mysteries, the most sacred in all Greece. The old temple of Demeter in Eleusis was standing in the time of Æschylus, whose father Euphorion is supposed to have been one of its priests. That temple was burnt by the Persians in the year 484 before Christ, in the lifetime of the poet, who was then forty-one years old. The struggle with Persia brought out the full energy of Greece. Literature, which is the expression of the highest life of man, always rises with the energies of which it comes. A people battling strenuously for what it cares for, and should care for, with its entire mind, lifts its thought up to the heights on which alone true poets can be bred. Such energies make strength in every way, and with it the force that creates wealth: then

follows luxury, by which men are tempted to rival one another in misuse of time; then literature comes down from the heights, descends to satire, or else babbles elegant and empty criticism on the regions she has left. But Æschylus was born among the mysteries that felt God's presence in the very earth he trod, and in a day of conflict that could put heroic life into the common citizen of Greece. When thirty-five years old, Æschylus not only fought at Marathon, but earned public distinction there "among the bravest of the brave." He was born poet, and poet born into the light of noble days. An old fable tells that when Æschylus was a boy Dionysus (Latin, Bacchus) appeared in dream to him. The boy had fallen asleep while watching a vineyard, the god in his dream bade him write tragedy, and when he awoke his first verses were made. His first public appearance as a tragic writer was at the age of twenty-five, but he was not victorious over competitors until the year in which the Persians burnt the temple of Demeter in Eleusis, when Æschylus was forty-one years old. He was fifty-three years old when he gained (B.C. 472) the prize at Athens with a trilogy, a set of three connected pieces of which "The Persians" was the first. And this is the earliest of the plays of Æschylus that has come down to us. He is said to have written seventy plays; but there remain to us only the seven which are here translated.

The Persian war came to an end in the year 470 B.C., and Cimon, the son of Miltiades, had sway in Athens. Two years afterwards, B.C. 468, Æschylus, who had then already produced the "Seven against Thebes," was defeated in the contest with a younger tragedian, Sophocles. Soon afterwards Æschylus went to the Court of Hiero, King of Syracuse. It is said that he had been accused at Athens of impiety for revealing some part of the Eleusinian mysteries in which he had been early initiated. Hiero died in the year 467 B.C., and Æschylus nine years later, at the age of sixty-seven, in the

year 458 B C., produced his trilogy known as the *Oresteia*, the one remaining example of the practice of establishing a poetical connection by unity of subject and design in the three tragedies that had been frequently the number offered in competition. This practice Æschylus was first to adopt. The three plays of the *Oresteia* are the *Agamemnon*, the *Choëphoræ* and the *Eumenides*. But his plays showed that he was a hero of Marathon not in accord with the political life of Athens as it then stood. In the *Eumenides* there was an unpopular chorus of Furies, and Æschylus again left Athens, to die two years afterwards, aged sixty-nine, at Gela in Sicily, B C 456. An oracle is said to have foretold that Æschylus would die by a blow from heaven. This oracle is said to have been fulfilled by the manner of his death. An eagle wishing to crack the shell of a tortoise had carried it up to let it fall upon a stone. Mistaking the bald head of the poet for a stone, it let the tortoise fall on that. Spenser applied the tradition to Archbishop Grindal struck by the bolt of Elizabeth's wrath, the Queen being the eagle and the tortoise a political problem :

For sitting so with baréd scalp  
 An eagle scaréd high  
 That, weening his white head was chalk,  
 A shell-fish down let fly.  
 She weened the shell-fish to have broke  
 But therewith bruised his brain :  
 So now astonied with the stroke  
 He lies in lingering pain.

Æschylus was the first of the three great tragedians of ancient Greece; first in time and highest in power. Sophocles said that he did what was right without knowing it. He himself spoke of his plays as fragments from the great banquet of Homer. His grandeur of thought becomes akin to the prophetic strain of an Isaiah, when in his "*Prometheus Bound*" he shadows out a Fate before which the old gods shall bow, and pierces to the sense of days that are not yet.

From dramatic recitations by a single actor, joined to song and dance of a trained chorus, Æschylus first passed to the employment of a second actor, each actor changing his mask to change his part. This was the first introduction of a true dramatic dialogue, and the dialogue then became the main part of the play, the use of the chorus being limited. But a second actor gave opportunity only for scenes of dialogue between two persons of the story at one time. Sophocles first introduced a third actor to take part in dialogue upon the stage, and Æschylus afterwards adopted this improvement. Æschylus also improved the masks in use, and the whole manner of representing persons of the story, and he taught the chorus to be actors, enforcing by their gestures and their dance movements the poetic purpose of each scene. To him a "well-trod stage" was a first necessity, if he was to show poetry in action.

We have come down from Olympus to the mole-hill—say, rather, the mud-heap—when we have left Prometheus for the Parisian stage villain in evening dress who lolls and lounges and lights cigarettes. But let Apollo answer it. The sun himself breeds maggots in a dead dog, being a god kissing carrion. From Æschylus to Monsieur Maquignon is it not change from free flight of the soul to lively rotting of the body it has left? In the name of Æschylus, their great forefather, let dramatists and actors dare to mount. Some dare; let others follow. Life is longer on the hill than by the marsh. There is not a poor super on the stage who has no day to mark with a victory in which he may find, like Æschylus, his Marathon, and through which he learns to flash, out of a true thought in himself, life-giving fire into the true conception of the poet, consuming fire on the false offerings that scatter filth upon the altar of his Art.

*August 1886.*

H. M.

## PROMETHEUS CHAINED.



ÆSCHYLUS wrote three Tragedies on the story of Prometheus: the first exhibited him as carrying the sacred gift of fire to men; the second as chained to Caucasus; the third as delivered from his chains. Of these the second only remains to us. The short account which Prometheus gives in this of the barbarous state of man before he taught them the civilizing arts makes us regret the loss of the first; and we have good reason to imagine that the portrait of Hercules in the third, delineated by this great master, must have been inimitable. There is in this remaining drama a sublimity of conception, a strength, a fire, a certain savage dignity peculiar to this bold writer. The scenery is the greatest that the human imagination ever formed: the wild and desolate rock frowning over the sea, the stern and imperious sons of Pallas and Styx holding up Prometheus to its rifted side whilst Vulcan fixes his chains, the Nymphs of the Ocean flying to its summit to commiserate his unhappy state, old Oceanus on his hippogriff, the appearance of Iö, the descent of Mercury, the whirlwind tearing up the sands, swelling the boisterous sea, and dashing its waves to the stars, the vollied thunders rolling all their fiery rage against the rock, and the figure of Prometheus unappalled at this terrible storm, and bidding defiance to Jupiter, would

require the utmost effort of Salvator Rosa's genius to represent them. Yet is the horrid greatness of this drama tempered with much tenderness; the reluctance of Vulcan to execute the severe commands of Jupiter is finely contrasted to the eager, unfeeling insolence of Strength and Force; the character of Iö is mournfully gentle; and the Oceanitidæ are of a most amiable mildness joined to a firm but modest prudence; even the untameable ferocity of Prometheus discovers under it a benevolence that interests us deeply in his sufferings.

---

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

STRENGTH AND FORCE.  
 VULCAN.  
 PROMETHEUS.  
 OCEANUS.

IO.  
 MERCURY.  
*CHORUS.*  
 NYMPHS OF THE OCEAN.

---

STRENGTH, FORCE, VULCAN, PROMETHEUS.

STRENGTH. At length then to the wide earth's extreme bounds,

To Scythia are we come, those pathless wilds  
 Where human footstep never marked the ground.  
 Now, Vulcan, to thy task; at Jove's command,  
 Fix to these high-projecting rocks this vain  
 Artificer of man; each massy link  
 Draw close, and bind his adamantine chains.  
 Thy radiant pride, the fiery flame, that lends  
 Its aid to every art, he stole, and bore  
 The gift to mortals; for which bold offence  
 The gods assign him this just punishment;

That he may learn to reverence the power  
Of Jove, and moderate his love to man.

VULCAN. Stern powers, your harsh commands have here  
Nor find resistance. My less hardy mind, [an end,  
Averse to violence, shrinks back, and dreads  
To bind a kindred god to this wild cliff,  
Exposed to every storm ; but strong constraint  
Compels me ; I must steel my soul, and dare :  
Jove's high commands require a prompt observance.  
High-thoughted son of truth-directing Themis,  
Thee with indissoluble chains, perforce,  
Must I now rivet to this savage rock,  
Where neither human voice, nor human form,  
Shall meet thine eye, but parching in the beams,  
Unsheltered, of yon fervid sun, thy bloom  
Shall lose its grace, and make thee wish th' approach  
Of grateful evening mild, whose dusky stole  
Spangled with gems shall veil his fiery heat ;  
And night upon the whitening ground breathe frore,  
But soon to melt, touched by his orient ray.  
So shall some present ill with varied pain  
Afflict thee ; nor is he yet born, whose hand  
Shall set thee free : thus thy humanity  
Receives its meed, that thou, a god, regardless  
Of the gods' anger, honouredst mortal man  
With courtesies, which justice not approves.  
Therefore the joyless station of this rock  
Unsleeping, unreclining, shalt thou keep,  
And many a groan, many a loud lament  
Throw out in vain, nor move the rig'rous breast  
Of Jove, relentless in his youthful power.

STR. No more ; why these delays, this foolish pity ?  
Dost thou not hate a god by gods abhorred,  
That prostitutes thy radiant boast to man ?

VUL. Strong are the ties of kindred and long converse.

STR. Well: but to disobey my sire's command is.

Darest thou do that? Is not that fear more strong?

VUL. Soft pity never touched thy ruthless mind.

STR. Will thy vain pity bring relief? Forbear.

Nor waste thyself in what avails not him.

VUL. Abhorred be all the fine skill of my hands.

STR. And why abhorred? For of these present toils  
Thy art, in very truth, is not the cause.

VUL. Yet wish I it had been some other's lot.

STR. All have their lot appointed, save to reign  
In heaven, for liberty is Jove's alone.

VUL. Truth guides thy words, nor have I to gainsay.

STR. Why thus reluctant then to bind his chains?

Let not thy sire observe these slow delays.

VUL. The manacles are ready, thou mayst see them.

STR. Bind them around his hands; with all thy force  
Strike, nail them fast, drive them into the rock.

VUL. Thus far the work is finished, and not slightly.

STR. Strike harder, strain them, let them not relax;  
His craft will work unthought-of ways t' escape.

VUL. This arm too is inextricably fixed.

STR. And now clasp this secure, that he may learn  
How impotent his craft, opposed to Jove.

VUL. This work he only can with justice blame.

STR. Across his breast draw now this stubborn bar  
Of adamant, fix firm its sharpened point.

VUL. Thy miseries, Prometheus, I bewail.

STR. Still dost thou linger? Still bewail the foes  
Of Jove? Take heed lest thou bewail thyself.

VUL. Thou seest an object horrible to sight.

STR. I see him honoured as his deeds deserve.  
But haste thee, fix this strong habergeon on him.

VUL. Constraint lies on me; urge not thou its rigour.



STR. Urge thee? I will, and in a higher tone  
Downwards; with all thy force entering his legs.

VUL. This too is finished, with no lingering speed.

STR. Strike hard, drive deep their penetrating points.  
Severe his eye, who nicely scans these works.

VUL. Thy voice is harsh, and ragged as thy iron.

STR. Now fair befall thy softness, yet uphold not  
My ruder and un pitying ruthlessness.

VUL. Let us be gone; the righteous task is done.

STR. Now triumph in thy insolence, now steal  
The glory of the gods, and bear the gift  
To mortal man; will they relieve thee now?  
False is the boasted prudence of thy name,  
Or wanted now to free thee from thy fate.

PROMETHEUS (*alone*). Fathered air, and ye swift-winged  
Ye rivers springing from fresh founts, ye waves, [winds,  
That o'er th' interminable ocean wreath  
Your crisped smiles, thou all-producing earth,  
And thee, bright sun, I call, whose flaming orb  
Views the wide world beneath, see what a god  
I suffer from the gods; with what fierce pains,  
Behold, what tortures for revolving ages  
I here must struggle; such unseemly chains  
This new-raised ruler of the gods devised.  
Ah me! That groan bursts from my anguished heart,  
My present woes and future to bemoan.  
When shall these sufferings find their destined end?  
But why that vain inquiry? My clear sight  
Looks through the future; unforeseen no ill  
Shall come on me; behoves me then to bear  
Patient my destined fate, knowing how vain  
To struggle with necessity's strong power.  
But to complain, or not complain, alike  
Is unavailable. For favours shown

To mortal man I bear this weight of woe ;  
 Hid in a hollow cane the fount of fire  
 I privately conveyed, of every art  
 Productive, and the noblest gift to men.  
 And for this slight offence, woe, woe is me !  
 I bear these chains, fixed to this savage rock,  
 Unsheltered from th' inclemencies of th' air.  
 Ah me ! what sound, what softly breathing odour  
 Steals on my sense ? Be you immortal gods,  
 Or mortal men, or of th' heroic race,  
 Whoe'er have reached this wild rock's extreme cliff,  
 Spectators of my woes, or what your purpose,  
 Ye see me bound, a wretched god, abhorred  
 By Jove, and every god that treads his courts,  
 For my fond love to man. Ah me ! again  
 I hear the sound of flutt'ring nigh ; the air  
 Pants to the soft beat of light-moving wings :  
 All, that approaches now, is dreadful to me.

## PROMETHEUS, CHORUS.

CHOR. Forbear thy fears : a friendly train  
 On busy pennons flutt'ring light,  
 We come, our sire not asked in vain,  
 And reach this promontory's height.  
 The clanging iron's horrid sound  
 Re-echoed through our caves profound ;  
 And though my cheek glows with shame's crimson dye,  
 Thus with unsandalled foot with winged speed I fly.

PRO. Ah me ! ah me !

Ye virgin sisters, who derive your race  
 From fruitful Thetis, and th' embrace  
 Of old Oceanus, your sire, that rolls  
 Around the wide world his unquiet waves,  
 This way turn your eyes, behold

With what a chain fixed to this rugged steep  
Th' unenvied station of the rock I keep.

CHOR. I see, I see ; and o'er my eyes,  
Surcharged with sorrow's tearful rain,  
Dark'ning the misty clouds arise ;  
I see thy adamantine chain ;  
In its strong grasp thy limbs confined,  
And withering in the parching wind :  
Such the stern power of heaven's new-sceptred lord,  
And law-controlling Jove's irrevocable word.

PRO. Beneath the earth,  
Beneath the gulfs of Tartarus, that spread  
Interminable o'er the dead,  
Had his stern fury fixed this rigid chain,  
Nor gods nor men had triumphed in my pain.  
But pendent in th' ethereal air,  
The pageant gratifies my ruthless foes,  
That gaze, insult, and glory in my woes.

CHOR. Is there a god, whose sullen soul  
Feels a stern joy in thy despair ?  
Owns he not pity's soft control,  
And drops in sympathy the tear ?  
All, all, save Jove ; with fury driven  
Severe he tames the sons of heaven ;  
And he will tame them, till some power arise  
To wrest from his strong hand the sceptre of the skies.

PRO. Yet he, e'en he,  
That o'er the gods holds his despotic reign,  
And fixes this disgraceful chain,  
Shall need my aid, the counsels to disclose  
Destructive to his honour and his throne.  
But not the honied blandishment, that flows  
From his alluring lips, shall aught avail ;  
His rigid menaces shall fail ;

Nor will I make the fatal secret known,  
Till his proud hands this galling chain unbind,  
And his remorse soothes my indignant mind.

CHOR. Bold and intrepid is thy soul,  
Fired with resentment's warmest glow ;  
And thy free voice disdains control,  
Disdains the tort'ring curb of woe.  
My softer bosom, thrilled with fear  
Lest heavier ills await thee here,  
By milder counsels wishes thee repose :  
For Jove's relentless rage no tender pity knows.

PRO. Stern though he be,  
And, in the pride of power terrific drest,  
Rears o'er insulted right his crest,  
Yet gentler thoughts shall mitigate his soul,  
When o'er his head this storm shall roll ;  
Then shall his stubborn indignation bend,  
Submit to sue, and court me for a friend.

CHOR. But say, relate at large for what offence  
Committed doth the wrath of Jove inflict  
This punishment so shameful, so severe :  
Instruct us, if the tale shocks not thy soul.

PRO. 'Tis painful to relate it, to be silent  
Is pain : each circumstance is full of woe.  
When stern debate amongst the gods appeared,  
And discord in the courts of heaven was roused ;  
Whilst against Saturn some conspiring willed  
To pluck him from the throne, that Jove might reign ;  
And some, averse, with ardent zeal opposed  
Jove's rising power and empire o'er the gods ;  
My counsels, though discreetest, wisest, best,  
Moved not the Titans, those impetuous sons  
Of Ouranus and Terra, whose high spirits,  
Disdaining milder measures, proudly weened

To seize by force the sceptre of the sky.  
Oft did my goddess mother, Themis now,  
Now Gaia, under various names designed,  
Herself the same, foretell me the event,  
That not by violence, that not by power,  
But gentle arts, the royalty of heaven  
Must be obtained. Whilst thus my voice advised,  
Their headlong rage deigned me not e'en a look.  
What then could wisdom dictate, but to take  
My mother, and with voluntary aid  
Abet the cause of Jove? Thus by my counsels  
In the dark deep Tartarean gulf enclosed  
Old Saturn lies, and his confederate powers.  
For these good deeds the tyrant of the skies  
Repays me with these dreadful punishments.  
For foul mistrust of those that serve them best  
Breathes its black poison in each tyrant's heart.  
Ask you the cause for which he tortures me?  
I will declare it. On his father's throne  
Scarce was he seated, on the chiefs of heaven  
He showered his various honours; thus confirming  
His royalty; but for unhappy mortals  
Had no regard, and all the present race  
Willed to extirpate, and to form anew.  
None, save myself, opposed his will; I dared;  
And boldly pleading saved them from destruction,  
Saved them from sinking to the realms of night.  
For this offence I bend beneath these pains,  
Dreadful to suffer, piteous to behold:  
For mercy to mankind I am not deemed  
Worthy of mercy; but with ruthless hate  
In this uncouth appointment am fixed here  
A spectacle dishonourable to Jove.

CHOR. Of iron is he formed and adamant,

Whose breast with social sorrow does not melt  
At thy afflictions : I nor wished to see them,  
Nor see them but with anguish at my heart.

PRO. It is a sight that strikes my friends with pity.

CHOR. But had th' offence no further aggravation ?

PRO. I hid from men the foresight of their fate.

CHOR. What couldst thou find to remedy that ill ?

PRO. I sent blind Hope t' inhabit in their hearts.

CHOR. A blessing hast thou given to mortal man.

PRO. Nay more, with generous zeal I gave them fire.

CHOR. Do mortals now enjoy the blazing gift ?

PRO. And by it shall give birth to various arts.

CHOR. For such offences doth the wrath of Jove  
Thus punish thee, relaxing nought of pain ?  
And is no bound prescribed to thy affliction ?

PRO. None else, but when his own will shall incline  
him.

CHOR. Who shall incline his will ? Hast thou no hope ?  
Dost thou not see that thou hast much offended ?  
But to point out th' offence to me were painful,  
And might sound harsh to thee : forbear we then ;  
Bethink thee how thy ills may find an end.

PRO. How easy, when the foot is not entangled  
In misery's thorny maze, to give monitions  
And precepts to th' afflicted ! Of these things  
I was not unadvised ; and my offence  
Was voluntary ; in man's cause I drew  
These evils on my head : but ills like these,  
On this aerial rock to waste away,  
This desert and unsocial precipice,  
My mind presaged it not. But cease your grief,  
Wail not my present woes ; on the rough point  
Of this firm cliff descend, and there observe  
What further may betide me, e'en the whole

Of my hard fate ; indulge me, O indulge  
This my request, and sympathize with me  
Thus wretched ; for affliction knows no rest,  
But rolls from breast to breast its vagrant tide.

CHOR. Not to th' unwilling are thy words directed.  
With light foot now this nimble-moving seat,  
This pure air, through whose liquid fields the birds  
Winnow their wanton way, I leave ; and now  
Alight I on this rude and craggy rock,  
Anxious to hear all thy unhappy tale.

## OCEANUS, PROMETHEUS, CHORUS.

OCEANUS. Far distant, through the vast expanse of air,  
To thee, Prometheus, on this swift-winged steed  
Whose neck unreined obeys my will, I come,  
In social sorrow sympathizing with thee.  
To this the near affinity of blood  
Moves me ; and be assured, that tie apart,  
There is not who can tax my dear regard  
Deeper than thou : believe me, this is truth,  
Not the false glozings of a flatt'ring tongue.  
Instruct me then in what my power may serve thee,  
For never shalt thou say thou hast a friend  
More firm, more constant, than Oceanus.

PRO. Ah me ! What draws thee hither ? Art thou come  
Spectator of my toils ? How hast thou ventured  
To leave the ocean waves, from thee so called,  
Thy rock-roofed grottos arched by nature's hand,  
And land upon this iron-teeming earth ?  
Comest thou to visit and bewail my ills ?  
Behold this sight, behold this friend of Jove,  
Th' assertor of his empire, bending here  
Beneath a weight of woes by him inflicted.

OCEA. I see it all, and wish to counsel thee,

Wise as thou art, to milder measures : learn  
 To know thyself ; new model thy behaviour,  
 As the new monarch of the gods requires.  
 What if thy harsh and pointed speech should reach  
 The ear of Jove, though on his distant throne  
 High-seated, might they not inflame his rage  
 'T' inflict such tortures, that thy present pains  
 Might seem a recreation and a sport ?  
 Cease then, unhappy sufferer, cease thy braves,  
 And meditate the means of thy deliverance.  
 To thee perchance this seems the cold advice  
 Of doting age ; yet, trust me, woes like these  
 Are earnings of the lofty-sounding tongue.  
 But thy unbending spirit disdains to yield  
 E'en to afflictions, to the present rather  
 Ambitious to add more. Yet shalt thou not,  
 If my voice may be heard, lift up thy heel  
 To kick against the pricks ; so rough, thou seest  
 So uncontrolled the monarch of the skies.  
 But now I go, and will exert my power,  
 If haply I may free thee from thy pains.  
 Meanwhile be calm ; forbear this haughty tone :  
 Has not thy copious wisdom taught thee this,  
 That mischief still attends the petulant tongue ?

PRO. I gratulate thy fortune, that on thee  
 No blame hath lighted, though associate with me  
 In all, and daring equally. But now  
 Forbear, of my condition take no care ;  
 Thou wilt not move him ; nothing moves his rigour :  
 Take heed then, lest to go brings harm on thee.

OCEA. Wiser for others than thyself I find  
 Thy thoughts ; yet shalt thou not withhold my speed.  
 And I have hopes, with pride I speak it, hopes  
 'T' obtain this grace, and free thee from thy sufferings.



PRO. For this thou hast my thanks ; thy courtesy  
With grateful memory ever shall be honoured.  
But think not of it, the attempt were vain,  
Nor would thy labour profit me ; cease then,  
And leave me to my fate : however wretched,  
I wish not to impart my woes to others.

OCEA. No ; for thy brother's fate, th' unhappy Atlas,  
Afflicts me : on the western shore he stands,  
Supporting on his shoulders the vast pillar  
Of Heaven and Earth, a weight of cumbrous grasp.  
Him too, the dweller of Cilicia's caves,  
I saw, with pity saw, Earth's monstrous son,  
With all his hundred heads, subdued by Force,  
The furious Typhon, who 'gainst all the gods  
Made war ; his horrid jaws with serpent-hiss  
Breathed slaughter, from his eyes the gorgon-glare  
Of baleful lightnings flashed, as his proud force  
Would rend from Jove his empire of the sky.  
But him the vengeful bolt, instinct with fire,  
Smote sore, and dashed him from his haughty vaunts,  
Pierced through his soul, and withered all his strength.  
Thus stretched out huge in length beneath the roots  
Of Ætna, near Trinacria's narrow sea,  
Astonied, blasted, spiritless he lies ;  
On whose high summit Vulcan holds his seat,  
And forms the glowing mass. In times to come  
Hence streams of torrent fire with hideous roar  
Shall burst, and with its wasteful mouths devour  
All the fair fields of fruitful Sicily.  
Such rage shall Typhon, blasted as he is  
With Jove's fierce lightning, pour incessant forth  
In smoking whirlwinds and tempestuous flame.

PRO. Thou art not unexperienced, nor hast need  
Of my instruction ; save thyself, how best

Thy wisdom shall direct thee. I will bear  
My present fate, till Jove's harsh wrath relents.

OCEA. Know'st thou not this, Prometheus, that soft  
speech

Is to distempered wrath medicinal?

PRO. When seasonably the healing balm's applied;  
Else it exasperates the swelling heart.

OCEA. But in the fair endeavour, in th' attempt,  
What disadvantage, tell me, dost thou see?

PRO. Unfruitful labour, and light-thoughted folly.

OCEA. Be that my weakness then. Oft when the wise  
Appears not wise, he works the greatest good.

PRO. This will be deemed my simple policy.

OCEA. These words indeed remand me to my grotto.

PRO. Cease to bewail me, lest thou wake his wrath.

OCEA. What, the new monarch's of heaven's potent  
throne?

PRO. Take care his indignation be not roused.

OCEA. Thy misery shall be my monitor.

PRO. Go then, be cautious, hold thy present judgment.

OCEA. Thy words add speed to my despatch. Already  
My plumed steed his levelled wings displays  
To fan the liquid air, through fond desire  
In his own lodge his wearied speed to rest.

PROMETHEUS, CHORUS.

CHOR. For thee I heave the heart-felt sigh,  
My bosom melting at thy woes;  
For thee my tear-distilling eye  
In streams of tender sorrow flows:  
For Jove's imperious ruthless soul,  
That scorns the power of mild control,  
Chastens with horrid tort'ring pain  
Not known to gods, before his iron reign.

E'en yet this ample region o'er  
Hoarse strains of sullen woe resound,  
Thy state, thy brother's state deplore,  
Age-honoured glories ruined round.  
Thy woes, beneath the sacred shade  
Of Asia's pastured forests laid,  
The chaste inhabitant bewails  
Thy groins re-echoing through his plaintive vales.

The Colchian virgin, whose bold hand  
Undaunted grasps the warlike spear ;  
On earth's last verge the Scythian band,  
The torpid lake Mæotis near ;  
Arabia's martial race, that wield  
The sharp lance in th' embattled field,  
Through all their rock-built cities moan,  
The crags of Caucasus return the groan.

One other, ere thy galling chain,  
Of heaven's high sons with tortures quelled,  
That rack each joint, each sinew strain,  
Titanian Atlas I beheld ;  
His giant strength condemned to bear  
The solid, vast, and pond'rous sphere.  
The springs whose fresh streams swell around,  
The hoarse waves from their depths profound,  
And all the gloomy realms below,  
Sigh to his sighs, and murmur to his woe.

PRO. It is not pride ; deem nobler of me, virgins ;  
It is not pride, that held me silent thus ;  
The thought of these harsh chains, that hang me here,  
Cuts to my heart. Yet who, like me, advanced  
To their high dignity our new-raised gods ?

But let me spare the tale, to you well known.  
The ills of man you've heard : I formed his mind,  
And through the cloud of barb'rous ignorance  
Diffused the beams of knowledge. I will speak,  
Not taxing them with blame, but my own gifts  
Displaying, and benevolence to them.  
They saw indeed, they heard ; but what availed  
Or sight, or sense of hearing, all things rolling  
Like the unreal imagery of dreams,  
In wild confusion mixed ? The lightsome wall  
Of finer masonry, the raftered roof  
They knew not ; but, like ants still buried, delved  
Deep in the earth, and scooped their sunless caves.  
Unmarked the seasons changed, the biting winter,  
'The flower perfumed spring, the ripening summer  
Fertile of fruits. At random all their works,  
Till I instructed them to mark the stars,  
Their rising, and, a harder science yet,  
Their setting. The rich train of marshalled numbers  
I taught them, and the meet array of letters.  
'T' impress these precepts on their hearts I sent  
Memory, the active mother of all wisdom.  
I taught the patient steer to bear the yoke,  
In all his toils joint-labourer with man.  
By me the harnessed steed was trained to whirl  
'The rapid car, and grace the pride of wealth.  
The tall barque, lightly bounding o'er the waves,  
I taught its course, and winged its flying sail.  
To man I gave these arts ; with all my wisdom  
Yet want I now one art, that useful art  
'To free myself from these afflicting chains.

CHOR. Unseemly are thy sufferings, sprung from error  
And impotence of mind. And now enclosed  
With all these ills, as some unskilful leech

That sinks beneath his malady, thy soul  
Desponds, nor seeks medicinal relief.

PRO. Hear my whole story, thou wilt wonder more,  
What useful arts, what science I invented.  
This first and greatest ; when the fell disease  
Preyed on the human frame, relief was none,  
Nor healing drug, nor cool refreshing draught,  
Nor pain-assuaging unguent ; but they pined  
Without redress, and wasted, till I taught them  
To mix the balmy medicine, of power  
To chase each pale disease, and soften pain.  
I taught the various modes of prophecy,  
What truth the dream portends, the omen what  
Of nice distinction, what the casual sight  
That meets us on the way, the flight of birds,  
When to the right, when to the left they take  
Their airy course, their various ways of life,  
Their feuds, their fondnesses, their social flocks.  
I taught th' Haruspex to inspect the entrails,  
Their smoothness, and their colour to the gods  
Grateful, the gall, the liver streaked with veins,  
The limbs involved in fat, and the long chine  
Placed on the blazing altar, from the smoke  
And mounting flame to mark th' unerring omen.  
These arts I taught. And all the secret treasures  
Deep buried in the bowels of the earth,  
Brass, iron, silver, gold, their use to man,  
Let the vain tongue make what high vaunts it may,  
Are my inventions all ; and, in a word,  
Prometheus taught each useful art to man.

CHOR. Let not thy love to man o'erleap the bounds  
Of reason, nor neglect thy wretched state ;  
So my fond hope suggests thou shalt be free  
From these base chains, nor less in power than Jove.

PRO. Not thus, it is not in the Fates that thus  
These things should end ; crushed with a thousand wrongs,  
A thousand woes, I shall escape these chains.

Necessity is stronger far than art.

CHO. Who then is ruler of necessity ?

PRO. The triple fates and unforgetting furies.

CHOR. Must Jove then yield to their superior power ?

PRO. He no way shall escape his destined fate.

CHOR. What, but eternal empire, is his fate ?

PRO. Thou may'st not know this now ; forbear t' inquire.

CHOR. Is it of moment what thou keep'st thus close ?

PRO. No more of this discourse, it is not time  
Now to disclose that which requires the seal  
Of strictest secrecy ; by guarding which  
I shall escape the misery of these chains.

CHORUS.

*Strophe.*

Never, never may my soul  
Jove's all-ruling power defy ;  
Never feel his harsh control,  
Sov'reign ruler of the sky.  
When the hallowed steer has bled,  
When the sacred feast is spread,  
'Midst the crystal waves below,  
Whence father Ocean's boundless billows flow,  
Let not my foot be slow ;  
There, th' ethereal guests among,  
No rude speech disgrace my tongue.  
May my mind this rev'rence keep ;  
Print it strong, and grave it deep.

*Antistrophe.*

When through life's extended scene  
Hope her steadfast lustre throws,

Swells the soul with joy serene,  
 With sublimest triumph glows.  
 Seest thou this pure lustre shine ?  
 Are these heart-felt raptures thine ?  
 My cold blood curdles in my veins,  
 To see thy hideous woes, thy tort'ring pains,  
 And adamantine chains.  
 Thy free soul, untaught to fear,  
 Scorned the danger threat'ning near ;  
 And for mortals dared defy  
 The sovereign monarch of the sky.

*Epode.*

Vain thy ardour, vain thy grace,  
 They nor force nor aid repay ;  
 Like a dream man's feeble race,  
 Short-lived reptiles of a day.  
 Shall their weak devices move  
 Th' ordered harmony of Jove ?  
 Touched with pity of thy pain,  
 All sad and slow I pour the moral strain ;  
 Changed from that melting vein,  
 When the light mellifluous measure  
 Round thy bath, and round thy bed  
 For our sea-nymph sister spread,  
 Awoke young love and bridal pleasure  
 And poured the soul of harmony,  
 To greet the bright Hesione.

## IO, PROMETHEUS, CHORUS.

IO. Whither, ah, whither am I borne ?  
 To what rude shore, what barb'rous race ? (O thou,  
 Whoe'er thou art, that chained to that bleak rock,  
 The seat of desolation, ruest thy crimes,

Say on what shore my wretched footsteps stray.—  
 Again that sting!—Ah me, that form again!—  
 With all his hundred eyes the earth-born Argus—  
 Cover it, Earth! See, how it glares upon me,  
 The horrid spectre!—Wilt thou not, O Earth,  
 Cover the dead, that from thy dark abyss  
 He comes to haunt me, to pursue my steps,  
 And drive me foodless o'er the barren strand?  
 Hoarse sounds the reed-compacted pipe, a note  
 Sullen and drowsy.—Miserable me!  
 Whither will these wide-wand'ring errors lead me?  
 How, son of Saturn, how have I offended,  
 That with these stings, these tortures thou pursuest me,  
 And drivest to madness my affrighted soul!  
 Hear me, supreme of gods, O hear thy suppliant,  
 Blast me with lightnings, bury me in th' earth,  
 Or cast me to the monsters of the sea;  
 But spare these toils, spare these wide-wand'ring errors,  
 Which drive me round the world, and know no rest.

CHOR. Hear'st thou the voice of this lamenting virgin?  
 For such she is, though in that form disguised.

PRO. I hear her griefs, that whirl her soul to madness,  
 Daughter of Inachus, whose love enflames  
 The heart of Jove; hence Juno's jealous rage  
 Drives the poor wanderer restless o'er the world.

IO. Whence is it that I hear my father's name?  
 Speak to my misery, tell me who thou art;  
 What wretch art thou, that to a wretch like me  
 Utterest these truths, naming the malady,  
 Which, heaven-inflicted, stings my tortured soul  
 To frenzy? Hence with hurrying steps I rove  
 Foodless, pursued by never ceasing wrath.  
 Ah me! What child of misery ever suffered  
 Misery like mine? But tell me, clearly tell me,



What woes await me yet, what ease, what cure?  
Say, if thou know'st, speak, tell a wand'ring virgin.

PRO. All, thou canst wish to learn, I'll tell thee clearly,  
Wrapt in no veil abstruse; but in clear terms,  
As friend to friend. Thine eyes behold Prometheus,  
Whose warm benevolence gave fire to men.

IO O thou, the common blessing of mankind,  
Wretched Prometheus, wherefore are these sufferings?

PRO. Scarce have I ceased lamenting my misfortunes.

IO. And wilt thou not allow me that sad office?

PRO. Ask what thou wilt, thou shalt learn all from me.

IO. Say then, who bound thee in that rifted rock?

PRO. The ruthless will of Jove, but Vulcan's hand.

IO. In what offending art thou chastened thus?

PRO. Suffice it thee so much has been declared.

IO. Say then what time shall end my wretched wand'rings.

PRO. Better repose in ignorance, than know.

IO. Whate'er my woes to come, hide them not from me.

PRO. That favour unreluctant could I grant thee.

IO. Why this delay then to declare the whole?

PRO. Ungrateful task to rend thy soul with anguish.

IO. Regard not me more than is pleasing to me.

PRO. Conjured thus strongly, I must speak. Hear then.

CHOR. Not yet; this mournful pleasure let me share:

Let us first learn the story of her woes;

Her lips will teach us each sad circumstance

Of misery past; the future be thy task.

PRO. Vouchsafe t' indulge their wish; they merit it;  
And are besides the sisters of thy father.

Nor light the recompense, when they, who hear,  
Melt at the melancholy tale, and drop,  
In pity drop, the sympathizing tear.

IO. Ill would excuse become me, or denial;  
Take then the plain unornamented tale

Ye wish to hear ; though sad the task enjoined,  
And hard ; for how relate the heaven-sent tempest  
That burst upon my head, my form thus changed  
And all the weight of woe that overwhelms me ?  
Still, when retired to rest, air-bodied forms  
Visit my slumbers nightly, soothing me  
With gentle speech, " Blest maid, why hoard for ever  
Thy virgin treasure, when the highest nuptials  
Await thy choice ; the flames of soft desire  
Have touched the heart of Jove ; he burns with love :  
Disdain not, gentle virgin, ah ! disdain not  
The couch of Jove ; to Lerna's deep recess,  
Where graze thy father's herds the meads along,  
Go, gentle virgin, crown the god's desires."  
The night returns, the visionary forms  
Return again, and haunt my troubled soul,  
Forbidding rest, till to my father's ear  
I dared disclose the visions of the night.  
To Pytho, to Dodona's vocal grove  
He sent his seers, anxious to know what best  
Was pleasing to the gods. Returned they bring  
Dark-uttered answers of ambiguous sense.  
At length one oracle distinct and plain  
Pronounced its mandates, charging Inachus  
'To drive me from his house and from my country,  
To rove at large o'er earth's extremest bounds :  
Should he refuse, the vengeful bolt of Jove,  
Winged with red flames, would all his race destroy.  
Obedient to the Pythian god he drove me  
Unwilling from his house, himself unwilling  
Compelled by Jove, and harsh necessity.  
Straight was my sense disordered, my fair form  
Changed as you see, disfigured with these horns ;  
And tortured with the bryze's horrid sting,

Wild with my pain with frantic speed I hurried  
 To Cenchrea's vale with silver-winding streams  
 Irrigous, and the fount whence Lerna spreads  
 Its wide expanse of waters ; close behind  
 In wrathful mood walked Argus, earth-born herdsman,  
 With all his eyes observant of my steps.  
 Him unawares a sudden fate deprived  
 Of life ; whilst I, stung with that heaven-sent pest,  
 Am driven with devious speed from land to land.  
 Thou hast my tale. If aught of woes to come  
 Thy prescient mind divines, relate them freely ;  
 Nor through false pity with fallacious words  
 Soothe my vain hopes, my soul abhors as base  
 The fabling tongue of glozing courtesy.

CHOR. No more, no more, forbear. Ah never, never  
 Conceived I that a tale so strange should reach  
 My ears ; that miseries, woes, distresses, terrors,  
 Dreadful to sight, intolerable to sense,  
 Should shock me thus : woe, woe, unhappy fate !  
 How my soul shudders at the fate of Io !

PRO. Already dost thou sigh, already tremble !  
 Check these emotions till the whole is heard.

CHOR. Speak, show us : to the sick some gleam of  
 comfort  
 Flows from the knowledge of their pains to come.

PRO. Your first request with ease has been obtained ;  
 For from her lips you wished to hear the tale  
 Of her afflictions. Hear the rest ; what woes  
 From Juno's rage await this suff'ring virgin.  
 And thou with deep attention mark my words,  
 Daughter of Inachus ; and learn from them  
 The traces of thy way. First then, from hence  
 Turn to the orient sun, and pass the height  
 Of these uncultured mountains ; thence descend

To where the wandering Scythians, train'd to bow  
 The distant-wounding bow, on wheels swift  
 Roll on their wretched cottages : to these  
 Approach not nigh, but turn thy devious steps  
 Along the rough verge of the murm'ring main,  
 And pass the barbarous country : on the left  
 The Chalybes inhabit, whose rude hands  
 Temper the glowing steel : beware of these,  
 A savage and inhospitable race.  
 Thence shalt thou reach the banks of that proud stream,  
 Which from its roaring torrent takes its name :  
 But pass it not, tempt not its dangerous depths  
 Unfordable, till now thy weary steps  
 Shall reach the distant bound of Caucasus,  
 Monarch of mountains ; from whose extreme height  
 The bursting flood rolls down his power of waters.  
 Passing those star-aspiring heights, descend  
 Where to the south the Amazonian tents,  
 Hostile to men, stretch o'er the plain ; whose troops  
 In after times shall near Thermodon's banks  
 Fix in Themiscyra's towers their martial rule,  
 Where Salmidesia points her cruel rocks,  
 And glories in her wrecks : this female train  
 With courteous zeal shall guide thee in thy way.  
 Arriving where the dark Cimmerian lake  
 Spreads from its narrow mouth its vast expanse,  
 Leave it, and boldly plunge thy vent'rous foot  
 In the Mæotic straits ; the voice of fame  
 Shall eternize thy passage, and from thee  
 Call it the Bosphorus : there shalt thou quit  
 The shores of Europe, and intrepid reach  
 The continent of Asia—Seems he now,  
 This tyrant of the skies, seems he in all  
 Of fierce and headlong violence, when his love

Plunges a mortal in such deep distresses?  
 A rugged wooer, virgin, have thy charms  
 Won thee; for be assured what I have told thee  
 Is but a prelude to the woes untold.

IO. Ah, miserable me!

PRO. Again that exclamation, that deep groan  
 What wilt thou do, when thou shalt learn the rest?

CHOR. Remains there aught of ills yet to be told?

PRO. A wide tempestuous sea of baleful woes.

IO. What then has life desirable? Why rather  
 From this rude cliff leap I not headlong down,  
 And end my woes? Better to die at once,  
 Than linger out a length of life in pain.

PRO. Ill wouldst thou bear my miseries, by the Fates  
 Exempt from death, the refuge of th' afflicted.  
 But my afflictions know no bounds, till Jove  
 Falls from th' imperial sovereignty of heaven.

IO. Shall he then fall? Shall the time come, when Jove  
 Shall sink dethroned? I think I should rejoice  
 To see the tyrant's ruin. Should I not.  
 Since from his hands I suffer all these ills.

PRO. Then be thou well assured it shall be so.

IO. And who shall wrest th' imperial sceptre from him?

PRO. Himself, destroyed by his improvident counsels.

IO. Oh say, if harmless what I ask, say how.

PRO. Urging a marriage he shall dearly rue.

IO. Heaven-sprung, or mortal? If permitted, say.

PRO. What matters which? It may not be disclosed.

IO. Shall then a wife deprive him of the throne?

PRO. She greater than the sire shall bear a son.

IO. Has he no means of power t' avert this fate?

PRO. None, till from these vile chains I shall be free.

IO. And who, 'gainst Jove's high will, shall set thee  
 free?

PRO. One, of necessity, from thee descended.

IO. From me! My son release thee from thy pains?

PRO. Third of thy race, first numb'ring ten descents.

IO. Oracular this, of difficult conjecture.

PRO. Check then thy wish, nor seek to know thy toils.

IO. Do not hold forth a grace, then snatch it from me.

PRO. Of two relations I will grant thee either.

IO. Propose the two, then leave the choice to me.

PRO. Shall I declare the rest of thy misfortunes,  
Or dost thou wish to know him that shall free me?

CHOR. The first to her, to me this other grace  
Vouchsafe, nor my request treat with disdain.

To her impart what toils remain; to me  
Him that shall free thee; this I most desire.

PRO. This your request I shall not be averse  
To gratify, and tell you all you wish.  
First for thy various wand'rings: Mark my words,  
And grave them on the tablet of thy heart.  
When thou shalt pass the flood, the common bound  
Of either continent, direct thy steps  
Right to the fiery portals of the east,  
'The sun's bright walk, along the roaring beach,  
'Till thou shalt come to the Gorgonian plains  
Of Cisthine, where dwell the swan-like forms  
Of Phorcys' daughters, bent and white with age;  
One common eye have these, one common tooth,  
And never does the sun with cheerful ray  
Visit them darkling, nor the moon's pale orb  
That silvers o'er the night. The Gorgons nigh,  
Their sisters these, spread their broad wings, and wreathe  
Their horrid hair with serpents, fiends abhorred,  
Whom never mortal could behold, and live.  
Be therefore warned, and let it profit thee  
To learn what else detestable to sight

Lies in thy way, and dang'rous. Shun the Gryphins,  
 Those dumb and rav'nous dogs of Jove. Avoid  
 The Arimaspians troops, whose frowning foreheads  
 Glare with one blazing eye ; along the banks,  
 Where Pluto rolls his streams of gold, they rein  
 Their foaming steeds ; approach them not, but seek  
 A land far distant, where the tawny race  
 Dwell near the fountains of the sun, and where  
 The Nigris pours his dusky waters ; wind  
 Along his banks, till thou shalt reach the fall  
 Where from the mountains with Papyrus crowned  
 The venerable Nile impetuous pours  
 His headlong torrent ; he shall guide thy steps  
 To those irriguous plains, whose triple sides  
 His arms surround ; there have the Fates decreed  
 Thee and thy sons to form the lengthened line.—  
 Is aught imperfect, aught obscure ? Resume  
 Th' inquiry, and be taught with greater clearness :  
 I have more leisure than I wish to have.

CHOR. If thou hast aught remaining, aught omitted,  
 To tell her of her woeful wand'rings, speak it :  
 If all has been declared, to us vouchsafe  
 The grace we ask ; what, thou rememb'rest well.

PRO. Her wand'ring in full measure has she heard,  
 That she may know she has not heard in vain,  
 Her labours passed, ere these rude rocks she reached,  
 Will I recite, good argument that truth  
 Stamps my predictions sure : nor shall I use  
 A length of words, but speak thy wand'rings briefly.  
 Soon as thy foot reached the Molossian ground,  
 And round Dodona's ridgy heights, where stands  
 The seat oracular of Thesprotian Jove,  
 And, wondrous prodigy, the vocal groves,  
 These in clear, plain, unquestionable terms

Hailed thee "Illustrious wife of Jove that shall be,"  
If that may soothe thy soul. The tort'ring sting  
Thence drove thee wand'ring o'er the wave-washed strand  
To the great gulf of Rhea, thence thy course  
Through the vexed billows hither. But know this,  
In after times shall that deep gulf from thee  
Be call'd th' Ionian, and preserve to men  
The memory of thy passage. This to thee,  
Proving the prescience of my mind, that sees  
More than appears: the rest to you and her,  
Resuming my discourse, I speak in common.  
On the land's extreme verge a city stands,  
Canobus, proudly elevate, nigh where the Nile  
Rolls to the sea his rich stream: there shall Jove  
Heal thy distraction, and with gentle hand  
Soothe thee to peace. Of his high race a son,  
The dusky Epaphus, shall rise, and rule  
The wide-extended land o'er which the Nile  
Pours his broad waves. In the fifth line from him  
Fifty fair sisters shall return to Argos  
Unwillingly, to fly the kindred beds  
Of fifty brothers; these with eager speed,  
Swift as the falcon's flight when he pursues  
The dove at hand, shall follow, nor obtain  
The nuptials, which th' indignant gods deny.  
These shall Pelasgia see by female hands  
Welt'ring in gore, the night's convenient gloom  
Fav'ring the daring deed; each female draws  
The trenchant sword, and in her husband's blood  
Stains the broad blade. Thus fatal to my foes  
Be love! Yet one shall feel its softer flame  
Melting her soul, and from the general carnage  
Preserve her husband, choosing to be deemed  
Of base degenerate spirit, rather than stain



Her gentle hands with blood. From her shall Argos  
Receive a long imperial line of kings.

The full distinct relation would be tedious.

From her shall rise the hero, strong to wing

The dreaded shaft ; he from these tort'ring pains

Shall set me free : this my age-honoured mother,

Titanian Themis, with oracular voice

Foretold ; but when, or how, requires a length

Of narrative, which known would nought avail thee.

Io. Ah me ! ah wretched me ! That pang again !

Again that fiery pang, whose madd'ning smart

Corrodes and rankles in my breast ! With fear

My heart pants thick ; wildly my eyeballs roll ;

Distraction drives my hurried steps a length

Of weary wand'ring ; my ungoverned tongue

Utters tumultuous ravings, that roll high -

The floods of passion swoln with horrid woes.

PROMETHEUS, CHORUS.

CHORUS.

*Strophe.*

Was it not wisdom's sovereign power

That beamed her brightest, purest flame,

T' illumine her sage's soul the thought to frame,

And clothe with words his heaven-taught lore ?

“ Whoe'er thou art, whom young desire

Shall lead to Hymen's holy fire,

Choose, from thy equals choose thy humble love :

Let not the pomp of wealth allure thine eye,

Nor high-traced lineage thy ambition move ;

Ill suits with low degree t' aspire so high.”

*Antistrophe.*

Never, oh never may my fate  
 See me a splendid victim led  
 To grace the mighty Jove's imperial bed,  
 Or share a god's magnificent state.  
 When Io's miseries meet my eyes,  
 What horrors in my soul arise!  
 Her virgin bosom, harb'ring high intent,  
 In man delights not, and his love disdains;  
 Hence the dire pest by wrathful Juno sent,  
 Her wide wild wand'rings hence, and agonizing pains.

*Epode.*

Me less ambitious thoughts engage,  
 And love within my humbler sphere:  
 Hence my soul rests in peace secure from fear,  
 Secure from danger's threat'ning rage.  
 Me may the powers that rule the sky  
 Ne'er view with love's resistless eye:  
 Ah! never be th' unequal conflict mine,  
 To strive with their inextricable love:  
 Might not my heart against itself combine?  
 Or how escape the powerful arts of Jove?

PRO. Yet shall this Jove, with all his self-willed pride,  
 Learn humbler thoughts, taught by that fatal marriage,  
 Which from the lofty throne of sovereign rule  
 Shall sink him to a low and abject state,  
 And on his head fulfil his father's curse,  
 The curse of Saturn, vented in that hour  
 When from his ancient royalty he fell.  
 Of all the gods not one, myself except,  
 Can warn him of his fate, and how to shun  
 Th' impending ruin. I know all, and how.

Let him then sit, and glorying in his height  
 Roll with his red right hand his volleyed thunder  
 Falsely secure, and wreath his bick'ring flames.  
 Yet nought shall they avail him, nor prevent  
 His abject and dishonourable fall.  
 Such rival adversary forms he now  
 Against himself, prodigious in his might,  
 And unassailable ; whose rage shall roll  
 Flames that surpass his lightnings, fiercer bolts  
 That quash his thunders : and from Neptune's hand  
 Dash his trined mace, that from the bottom stirs  
 The troubled sea, and shakes the solid earth.  
 Crushed with this dreadful ruin shall he learn  
 How different, to command, and to obey.

CHOR. Thy ominous tongue gives utterance to thy  
 wish.

PRO. It is my wish, and shall be ratified.

CHOR. What, shall high Jove bend to a greater lord ?

PRO. And to a yoke more galling stoop his neck.

CHOR. Dost thou not fear, vaunting this bold discourse ?

PRO. What should I fear, by Fate exempt from death ?

CHOR. But he may add fresh tortures to thy pain.

PRO. Let him then add them, I await them all.

CHOR. Wise they, who reverence the stern power of  
 vengeance.

PRO. Go then, with prompt servility fall down  
 Before your lord, fawn, cringe, and sue for grace.  
 For me, I value him at less than nothing.  
 Let him exert his brief authority,  
 And lord it whilst he may ; his power in Heaven  
 Shall vanish soon, nor leave a trace behind.—  
 But see, his messenger hastes on amain,  
 Th' obsequious lackey of this new-made monarch :  
 He comes, I ween, the bearer of fresh tidings.

MERCURY, PROMETHEUS, CHORUS.

MERCURY. To thee grown old in craft, deep drenched in gall,

Disgustful to the gods, too prodigal  
Of interdicted gifts to mortal man,  
Thief of the fire of Heaven, to thee my message.  
My father bids thee say what nuptials these  
Thy tongue thus vaunts as threat'ning his high power ;  
And clearly say, couched in no riddling phrase,  
Each several circumstance ; propound not to me  
Ambiguous terms, Prometheus ; for thou seest  
Jove brooks not such, unfit to win his favour.

PRO. Thou doest thy message proudly, in high terms,  
Becoming well the servant of such lords.  
Your youthful power is new ; yet vainly deem ye  
Your high-raised towers impregnable to pain :  
Have I not seen two sovereigns of the sky  
Sink from their glorious state ? And I shall see  
A third, this present lord, with sudden ruin  
Dishonourably fall. What, seem I now  
To dread, to tremble at these new-raised gods ?  
That never shall their force extort from me.  
Hence then, the way thou cam'st return with speed :  
Thy vain inquiries get no other answer.

MER. Such insolence before, so fiery fierce,  
Drew on thy head this dreadful punishment.

PRO. My miseries, be assured, I would not change  
For thy gay servitude, but rather choose  
To live a vassal to this dreary rock,  
Than lackey the proud heels of Jove. These words,  
If insolent, your insolence extorts.

MER. I think thou art delighted with thy woes.

PRO. Delighted ! Might I see mine enemies  
Delighted thus ! And thee I hold among them.

MER. And why blame me for thy calamities?

PRO. To tell thee in a word, I hate them all,  
These gods; of them I deserved well, and they  
Ungrateful and unjust work me these ills.

MER. Thy malady, I find, is no small madness.

PRO. If to detest my enemies be madness,  
It is a malady I wish to have.

MER. Were it well with thee, who could brook thy  
pride?

PRO. Ah me!

MER. That sound of grief Jove doth not know.

PRO. Time, as its age advanceth, teaches all things.

MER. All its advances have not taught thee wisdom.

PRO. I should not else waste words on thee, a vassal.

MER. Nought wilt thou answer then to what Jove  
asks.

PRO. If due, I would repay his courtesy.

MER. Why am I checked, why rated as a boy?

PRO. A boy thou art, more simple than a boy,  
If thou hast hopes to be informed by me.  
Not all his tortures, all his arts shall move me  
T' unlock my lips, till this cursed chain be loosed.  
No, let him hurl his flaming lightnings, wing  
His whitening snows, and with his thunders shake  
The rocking earth, they move not me to say  
What force shall wrest the sceptre from his hand.

MER. Weigh these things well, will these unloose thy  
chains?

PRO. Well have they long been weighed, and well con-  
sidered.

MER. Subdue, vain fool, subdue thy insolence,  
And let thy miseries teach thee juster thoughts.

PRO. Thy counsels, like the waves that dash against  
The rock's firm base, disquiet but not move me.

Conceive not of me that, through fear what Jove  
 May in his rage inflict, my fixed disdain  
 Shall e'er relent, e'er suffer my firm mind  
 To sink to womanish softness, to fall prostrate,  
 To stretch my supplicating hands, entreating  
 My hated foe to free me from these chains.  
 Far be that shame, that abject weakness from me.

MER. I see thou art implacable, unsoftened  
 By all the mild entreaties I can urge ;  
 But like a young steed reined, that proudly struggles,  
 And champs his iron curb, thy haughty soul  
 Abates not of its unavailing fierceness.  
 But pride, disdainng to be ruled by reason,  
 Sinks weak and valueless. But mark me well,  
 If not obedient to my words, a storm,  
 A fiery and inevitable deluge  
 Shall burst in threefold vengeance on thy head.  
 First, his fierce thunder winged with lightning flames  
 Shall rend this rugged rock, and cover thee  
 With hideous ruin : long time shalt thou lie  
 Astonied in its rifted sides, till dragged  
 Again to light ; then shall the bird of Jove,  
 The rav'ning eagle, lured with scent of blood,  
 Mangle thy body, and each day returning,  
 An uninvited guest, plunge his fell beak,  
 And feast and riot on thy black'ning liver.  
 Expect no pause, no respite, till some god  
 Comes to relieve thy pains, willing to pass  
 The dreary realms of ever-during night,  
 The dark descent of Tartarus profound.  
 Weigh these things well ; this is no fiction drest  
 In vaunting terms, but words of serious truth.  
 The mouth of Jove knows not to utter falsehood,  
 But what he speaks is fate. Be cautious then,

Regard thyself; let not o'erweening pride  
Despise the friendly voice of prudent counsel.

CHOR. Nothing amiss we deem his words, but fraught  
With reason, who but wills thee to relax  
Thy haughty spirit, and by prudent counsels  
Pursue thy peace: be then advised; what shame  
For one so wise to persevere in error!

PRO. All this I knew ere he declared his message.  
That enemy from enemy should suffer  
Extreme indignity is nothing strange.  
Let him then work his horrible pleasure on me;  
Wreathe his black curling flames, tempest the air  
With volleyed thunders and wild warring winds,  
Rend from its roots the firm earth's solid base,  
Heave from the roaring main its boisterous waves,  
And dash them to the stars; me let him hurl,  
Caught in the fiery tempest, to the gloom  
Of deepest 'Tartarus; not all his power  
Can quench th' ethereal breath of life in me.

MER. Such ravings, such wild counsels might you hear,  
From moon-struck madness. What is this but madness?  
Were he at ease, would he abate his frenzy?  
But you, whose gentle hearts with social sorrow  
Melt at his suff'rings, from this place remove,  
Remove with speed, lest the tempestuous roar  
Of his fierce thunder strike your souls with horror.

CHOR. To other themes, to other counsels turn  
Thy voice, where pleaded reason may prevail:  
This is ill urged, and may not be admitted.  
Wouldst thou solicit me to deeds of baseness?  
Whate'er betides, with him will I endure it.  
The vile betrayer I have learned to hate;  
There is no fouler stain, my soul abhors it.

MER. Remember you are warned; if ill o'ertake you

Accuse not Fortune, lay not the blame on Jove,  
As by his hand sunk in calamities  
Unthought of, unforeseen : no, let the blame  
Light on yourselves ; your folly not unwarned,  
Not unawares, but 'gainst your better knowledge,  
Involved you in th' inextricable toils.

PRO. He fables not ; I feel in very deed  
The firm earth rock ; the thunder's deep'ning roar  
Rolls with redoubled rage ; the bick'ring flames  
Flash thick ; the eddying sands are whirled on high ;  
In dreadful opposition the wild winds  
Rend the vexed air ; the boist'rous billows rise  
Confounding sea and sky ; th' impetuous storm  
Rolls all its terrible fury on my head.  
Seest thou this, awful Themis ; and thou, Æther,  
Through whose pure azure floats the general stream  
Of liquid light, see you what wrongs I suffer !



## THE SUPPLICANTS.

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THE fire and fury that rages through the former play is agreeably contrasted, where perhaps the reader least expected it, with the sober spirit of the daughters of Danaus. These illustrious Supplicants are drawn indeed with a firmness of soul becoming their high rank, but tempered with a modest and amiable sensibility, and an interesting plaintiveness, that might have been a model even to the gentle and passionate Cvid, and that heart must have little of the fine feelings of humanity that does not sympathize with their distress. The provident wisdom of their father Danaus, the calm but firm dignity of Pelasgus, the inviolable attachment to the laws of hospitality, the solemn sense of religion and the chasteness of sentiment through the whole, must please every mind that is capable of being touched with the gracious simplicity of ancient manners.

The scene is near the shore, in an open grove close to the altar and images of the gods presiding over the sacred games, with a view of the sea and the ships of Ægyptus on one side, and of the towers of Argos on the other; with hills, and woods, and vales, a river flowing between them; altogether with the persons of the drama forming a picture

that would have well employed the united pencils of Poussin and Claude Lorraine.

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PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

CHORUS, THE DAUGHTERS  
OF DANAUS.  
DANAUS.

PELASGUS.  
HERALD.

---

CHORUS. Protector of the suppliant, gracious Jove,  
Look with an eye of pity on this strain,  
Which from the gentle depths of Nile have sped  
Their naval enterprise. Those sacred fields,  
That border on the Syrian wastes, we leave,  
Not by the public voice of justice doomed  
For blood, but willing fugitives from youths  
Too near allied, whose impious love would raise  
Perforce the nuptial bed by us abhorred ;  
Sons of Ægyptus they. Our father Danaus,  
On whose authority we build our counsels,  
And strengthen our abhorrence, planned these measures,  
And wrought us to this honourable toil,  
To wing our swift flight o'er the billowy main,  
And reach the shores of Argos, whence we draw  
Our vaunted lineage, from the embrace of Jove  
Enamoured of that virgin, whom transformed  
The tort'ring sting drove wand'ring o'er the world.  
To what more friendly region can we take  
Our progress, bearing in our suppliant hands  
These peaceful branches crowned with sacred wreaths ?  
Ye royal towers, thou earth, and ye fair streams  
Of orient crystal, ye immortal gods  
In the high heavens enthroned, ye awful powers  
That deep beneath hold your tremendous seats,  
Jove the preserver, guardian of the roof

Where dwells the pious man, receive your suppliants,  
Breathe o'er these realms your favourable spirit,  
And form them to receive this female train !  
But for those men, that proud injurious band  
Sprung from Ægyptus, ere they fix their foot  
On this moist shore, drive them into the deep,  
With all their flying streamers and quick oars,  
There let them meet the whirlwind's boist'rous rage,  
Thund'rings, and lightnings, and the furious blasts  
That harrow up the wild tempestuous waves,  
And perish in the storm, ere they ascend  
Our kindred bed, and seize against our will  
What nature and the laws of blood deny.

To thee, th' avenging power  
Adored beyond the waves of this wide main,  
Raise we the solemn strain,  
Her progeny, that cropped each various flower  
Which decked the fragrant mead,  
Till Jove's soft touch her altered shape caressed,  
And soothed her soul to rest :  
Thereto we add thy fate-appointed name,  
Epaphus of mighty fame,  
To thee we raise the strain, while now we tread  
Thy revered mother's fertile soil,  
And record each various toil ;  
Now shall each trace to light be brought,  
Though far surpassing human thought ;  
Now shall the wondrous tale unfold,  
Mysterious deeds of times of old.  
Dwells in this land some augur near ?  
If these sad wailings reach his ear,  
Will he not deem the mournful note  
Warbled from Philomela's throat,

Such time as from the falcon's wing  
 She leaves her fav'rite haunt and spring,  
 And o'er her nest, and o'er her young  
 Attunes her sweetest, saddest song,  
 And in the melancholy strain  
 Laments the fate of Itys slain ;  
 In sullen rage the mother stands,  
 And in her son's blood bathes her hands.  
 In notes so sweet, so sad, I try  
 To raise th' Ionian harmony ;  
 And rend these cheeks, that ripening drew  
 On Nile's warm banks their vermeil hue ;  
 Whilst at each solemn, pensive pause  
 My bursting heart the deep sigh draws,  
 And, woe-betrothed, fears e'en its friends,  
 If yet perchance one friend attends,  
 For that our sails the deep explore,  
 Leaving our native dusky shore.

Ye gods, from whom we proudly trace  
 The glories of our high-born race,  
 Hear us, ye powers, propitious hear,  
 And show that justice is your care ;  
 Guard in our just, our holy cause  
 The sanctity of Nature's laws ;  
 You, that abhor each impious deed,  
 Arise, protect the nuptial bed.  
 When Mars to slaughter gives the reins,  
 And rages o'er th' ensanguined plains,  
 To each that flies the altar gives  
 A refuge, and the suppliant lives,  
 For Jove, with pious prayers adored,  
 Commands stern war to drop the sword.

Jove's firm decree, though wrapt in night,  
 Beams 'midst the gloom a constant light ;

Man's fate obscure in darkness lies,  
Not to be pierced by mortal eyes ;  
The just resolves of his high mind  
A glorious consummation find ;  
Though in majestic state enthroned  
Thick clouds and dark enclose him round  
As from the tower of heaven his eye  
Surveys bold man's impiety ;  
'Till, his ripe wrath on vengeance bent,  
He arms each god for punishment,  
And from his high and holy throne  
Sends all his awful judgments down.  
And may his eye our wrongs survey,  
Marked by insulting man his prey ;  
As each bold youth by passion fired  
Against our bosom-peace conspired,  
And to deceit's smooth influence  
Joined rude and boist'rous violence :  
An infant forest these, that shoot  
Their wild growth from one parent root,  
And o'er our fresh bloom strive to spread  
Their cheerless and malignant shade.  
Thus I attune my notes of woe,  
And bid the varied measures flow ;  
Now the shrilling descant chase,  
Now solemn sink the deep'ning bass ;  
Thus bid the warbled cadence 'plain,  
And steep in tears the mournful strain ;  
A strain to grace my obsequies,  
Whilst yet I view yon golden skies.

Ye rising hills that crown this shore,  
Where Apis reigned in years of yore,  
Propitious hear me, nor disdain  
To let your echoes learn this strain ;

Barbaric though my voice and rude,  
 Well may its notes be understood ;  
 Barbaric though this purpled stole,  
 Frounced around with linen roll,  
 This blushing veil though Sidon gave,  
 Ye hills of Apis hear, and save !

The vow performed the gods atoned,  
 The pious rites with blessings crowned,  
 Death distant waits with slackened pace,  
 Nor dares profane the sacred place.  
 But will he now his foot repress ?  
 Will the kind gods their votary bless ?  
 Ah me ! these swelling waves of woe,  
 Whither, ah ! whither will they flow ?

Ye rising hills that crown this shore,  
 Where Apis reigned in years of yore,  
 Propitious hear me, nor disdain  
 To let your echoes learn this strain ;  
 Barbaric though my voice and rude,  
 Well may its notes be understood ;  
 Barbaric though this purpled stole,  
 Frounced around with linen roll :  
 This blushing veil though Sidon gave,  
 Ye hills of Apis hear, and save !

The dashing oar, the swelling sail,  
 That caught the favourable gale,  
 Safe from the storms, nor I complain,  
 Wafted our frail bark o'er the main.  
 All-seeing sovereign Sire, defend,  
 And guide us to a prosp'rous end ;  
 Save us, O save the seed divine  
 Of our great mother's sacred line ;  
 From man's rude touch O save us free,  
 And help insnared chastity !

Thou, virgin daughter of high Jove,  
A virgin's vows hear, and approve ;  
Holding thy sober, awful state,  
Protect us from the touch we hate ;  
From bold incontinence secure,  
Pure thyself, preserve us pure ;  
Save us, O save the seed divine  
Of our great mother's sacred line ;  
From man's rude touch O save us free,  
And help insnared chastity !

If not, this glowing train, that trace  
From Heaven's high King their high-born race,  
Shall voluntary victims go  
To th' all-receiving realms below ;  
To their dread gods for refuge fly,  
If Heaven's high powers their aid deny.

O sovereign Jove, shall wrath divine  
For Iö still pursue her line ?  
Still thy dread queen in fury rise,  
And in her cause arm all the skies ?  
She wings these winds, this tempest spreads,  
That bursts in vengeance o'er our heads.  
O sovereign Jove, for this thy ear  
No meed of grateful voice shall hear ;  
Thy son dishonoured, whom of yore  
To thee disfigured Iö bore.  
Turn then, O turn thy gracious eye,  
And hear us from thy throne on high !

## DANAUS, CHORUS.

DANAUS. Daughters, this hour demands your utmost  
prudence ;

Your father's care, your old and faithful pilot,  
Hath held your helm safe o'er the dangerous deep ;  
Behoves you now at land with provident heed  
To form your counsels, and attentive mark  
My words. Yon cloud of dust, though tongueless, speaks  
An army nigh ; I hear their wheels of brass  
Loud rattling on their axles ; now I view  
Chariots and horse distinct, and shields, and spears  
Far gleaming o'er the plain ; the lords perchance  
That rule these realms, informed of our arrival,  
Advance to us ; but bring they minds of peace,  
Guiltless of violence, or with ruthless rage  
Rush on this train, best sit together, virgins,  
Around this altar, sacred to the gods  
Presiding o'er the games : a surer refuge  
Than tower or shield war-proof an altar gives.  
Go then with speed, and reverent in your hands  
Hold forth these supplicating branches crowned  
With snowy wreaths, ensigns of awful Jove.  
With modest, grave, and decent speech receive  
These strangers, as beseems the wretched state  
Of unknown supplicants ; declare at once  
Distinct and brief the motives of your flight  
Unstained with blood : let not your roving eye  
Dart the bold glance, impeaching modesty.  
Be not thy voice heard first, nor let its answers  
Weary their ear ; they quickly take offence ;  
Submissive urge thy plea, rememb'ring well  
The pride of words ill suits thy low estate,  
A fugitive, a stranger, in distress.



CHOR. Wise are thy counsels, and with reverend heed  
 Shall be remembered, father ; and may Jove,  
 The author of our race, look gracious on us.

DAN. Quick be his aid, strong guardian of our cause.

CHOR. Thus near I choose my seat.

DAN. Supreme of gods,  
 Pity our suff'rings, pity ere we perish.

CHOR. Look with an eye of mercy on thy suppliants,  
 Impart thy grace, and bless us with success.

DAN. Address you now this crested bird of Jove.

CHOR. Thee, radiant Sun, thy tutelary rays  
 Streaming with gold, sacred Apollo, god  
 Once exiled from the skies, to thee I call,  
 Look on our woes, and pity wretched mortals.

DAN. O succour us, assist us, gracious power.

CHOR. Whom of these gods, whom yet shall we invoke ?

DAN. Mark you this trident ? It declares the god.

CHOR. Safe hast thou brought us o'er the swelling sea,  
 Receive us then, and save us on the shore.

DAN. This, in the Grecian rites, is Mercury.

CHOR. Nothing but good announce thou to the free.

DAN. This common altar, sacred to these gods,  
 Approach with awe ; the ground is holy ; sit  
 Like turtles trembling at the falcon's flight,  
 The winged foe of all the winged race,  
 Polluter of his kind ; for how can bird,  
 That preys on bird, be pure ? Or how can man,  
 That from th' unwilling father drags to marriage  
 Th' unwilling daughter, how can he be chaste ?  
 Or shall the haughty deed e'en after death  
 Escape unpunished in the realms below ?  
 No : for another Jove, they say, holds there  
 His awful seat, and to the guilty dead  
 Awards just vengeance. But be wary, try

The sanctity of the place ; and may it bring  
The blessing of success to crown your hopes.

PELASGUS, DANAUS, CHORUS.

PELASGUS. What female train address we here, and  
Gorgeously vested in barbaric stoles [whence,  
That float in many a fold? Our Argos sees not  
Her daughters thus arrayed, nor Greece through all  
Its States. That thus without some previous herald,  
The public hospitality not asked,  
Without safe conduct, you have boldly ventured  
To land upon our coasts, this is most strange.  
Only these boughs, as supplicants are wont,  
You lay before these gods that o'er the games  
Preside : hence Greece forms one conjecture only,  
Of all besides uncertain what to think,  
Till your distinct relation clears our doubts.

CHOR. As to our habits, thy remarks are just.  
But how should I address thee? as a man  
Of private station, or with hallowed charge  
Presiding here, or chieftain of the State?

PEL. Nay, answer me, and speak with confidence.  
Pelagus bids you, sovereign of this land :  
My sire Palæcthon, of high ancestry  
Original with this earth : from me, their king,  
The people take their name, and boast themselves  
Pelagians. O'er a wide extent of land,  
Through which the Algos flows, and Strymon west,  
From the Perrhæbians o'er the sacred heights  
Of Pindus, to Pœonia, and beyond  
The mountains of Dodona, spacious realms,  
My empire stretches, bounded by the sea  
This way. In ancient times the Apian plains  
From Apis drew their honoured name, the son

Of Phœbus, in his father's healing arts  
 Skilled : from Naupactus came the heaven-taught sage  
 And cleared the land of that pestiferous brood,  
 Which the moist earth, foul with corrupted gore,  
 Of old engendered, fierce with dragon-rage,  
 A cruel neighbourhood ; their horrible pride  
 The matchless Apis quelled, and freed the land  
 Of Argos. Hence in sacred reverence  
 We hold his memory. Instructed thus  
 Say on, declare your race, and aught besides :  
 But know we brook not the long pomp of words.

CHOR. Brief will I be, and plain. Of Argive race  
 We boast ourselves, and draw our vaunted lineage  
 From her, the lowing mother, in her son  
 Supremely blest. All this my words shall prove.

PEL. Unplausible your tale. Can it be, strangers,  
 That you're of Argive race? Liker, I ween,  
 The Libyan damsels, in no wise resembling  
 Our daughters : such perchance the Nile might rear,  
 Such in the glowing tint the artist's hand  
 Might mark the Colchian dame ; and such, I hear,  
 The wand'ring Indians, mounted on their camels,  
 Along the tented plains out-stretching wide  
 To Æthiopia's cities ; such the troops  
 Of warlike Amazons ; and were your hands  
 Armed with the polished bow, I might conjecture  
 You were of these ; therefore I thirst to know  
 More fully, how you are of Argive race.

CHOR. Fame speaks of Iö, in this Argive land  
 The sacred guardian of the fanè of Juno.  
 Her, as the common voice loudly reports——

PEL. Reports it that the Thunderer, of her charms  
 Enamoured, with a mortal mixed the god ?

CHOR. And met in secret shades, concealed from Juno.

PEL. How ended then the bickerings of these powers?

CHOR. The Argive queen transformed her to a heifer.

PEL. Does Jove approach her in this fair-horned shape?

CHOR. Himself, they say, transforming to a bull.

PEL. What angry measures formed his royal consort?

CHOR. A herdsman she assigned starred round with eyes.

FEL. What herdsman this, and how starred round with eyes?

CHOR. The earth-born Argus : but him Hermes slew.

PEL. What new device to vex the wretched heifer?

CHOR. A winged pest, armed with a horrid sting :

Those on the banks of Nile call it the bryze.

PEL. And drove her in long wand'rings from this land.

CHOR. Thy words, according well, speak this for me.

PEL. Reached she Canobus, and the walls of Memphis?

CHOR. There Jove with gentle hand soothed her to rest ;

There planted his illustrious progeny.

PEL. Who from this heifer boasts his race divine?

CHOR. Hence Epaphus received his name ; from him

Libya, whose fair domains extended wide.

PEL. What other branch sprung from this mighty root?

CHOR. Belus, the father of two sons ; my sire,

Behold, is one.

PEL. Declare the sage's name.

CHOR. Danaus : his brother whom by name they call

Ægyptus, is the sire of fifty sons.

Thus have I shown thee our high ancestry ;

Protect us then, support an Argive train.

PEL. You seem indeed to draw your origin

Of old from hence : but say, how have you dared

To leave your father's house? What chance constrained you?

CHOR. King of Pelasgia, various are the ills

Of mortal man ; and never mayst thou see

Misfortune mounting on the self-same wing.  
 Who would have thought we should have winged our flight  
 Thus unexpected to the coast of Argos  
 Allied of old, amazement in our van,  
 And strong abhorrence of the nuptial bed !

PEL. Why, sayest thou, fly you to these gods for refuge,  
 Holding these fresh-cropt branches crowned with wreaths ?

CHOR. That to the offspring of Ægyptus we  
 Might not be slaves.

PEL. Whence this reluctance, say,  
 From hate ? Or do your laws forbid such nuptials ?

CHOR. And who would wish to make their friends their  
 lords ?

PEL. Yet thus the strength of families gains force.

CHOR. And to the wretched, death is not unwelcome.

PEL. In what would you engage my honour to you ?

CHOR. Not to enthrall us to Ægyptus' sons,  
 Should they demand us.

PEL. Arduous is the task  
 Thou wouldst enjoin me, to provoke new wars.

CHOR. O'er him that succours, Justice holds her shield.

PEL. If from the first the cause were my concern.

CHOR. Revere these gods, the guardians of your State,  
 Encircled with this supplicating train.

PEL. Struck with religious horror I behold  
 These branches shade this consecrated seat.

CHOR. Dread then the wrath of Jove, who guards the  
 suppliant.

Son of Palæcthon, hear me ; with a heart  
 Prompt to relieve, King of Pelasgia, hear.  
 Behold me suppliant, an exile, wand'ring,  
 Like the poor lamb, that on the craggy steep  
 Raises her mournful voice, secure of help,  
 And warns her faithful keeper of her danger.

PEL. I see a stranger train, with boughs new-plucked  
 Shading these gods that o'er the games preside.  
 May their arrival, though now strangers here,  
 Yet hence descended, bring no dread event ;  
 Nor from this sudden, unexpected hap  
 Let war, which least we wish, disturb our State.

CHOR. May Themis, guardian of the suppliant, sprung  
 From powerful Jove, look on our harmless flight.  
 Nor from a younger let thy age disdain  
 To learn the reverence due to supplicants,  
 From whose pure hands the fav'ring gods accept  
 The grateful offering.

PEL.                    Make not your request  
 To me in private ; if pollution stains  
 The public State, the public has the charge  
 To expiate that stain ; nor can my voice,  
 Ere consultation with the people held,  
 Warrant the sanction of the public faith.

CHOR. Thou art the State ; the public thou ; thy  
       voice,  
 Superior to control, confirms the sanction  
 This altar gives ; thy sole authority,  
 High-sceptred monarch of a sovereign throne,  
 Is here obeyed : religion's voice pleads for us ;  
 Revere it, nor profane these hallowed seats.

PEL. That profanation to mine enemies.  
 To grant you my protection cannot be  
 But with much danger ; to reject your prayers  
 Humanity forbids : perplexed I fear  
 To act, or not to act, and fix my choice.

CHOR. On Heaven's high throne he sits, whose watchful  
       eye  
 Regards th' afflicted, when unfeeling pride  
 Denies that justice which the law asks for them.

Reverence his power ; for when the sufferer groans  
With pangs unpitied, the fixed wrath of Jove,  
Protector of the suppliant, burns severe.

PEL. If by your country's laws Ægyptus' sons,  
As next of blood, assert a right in you,  
Who should oppose them? It behoves thee then  
By your own laws to prove such claim unjust.

CHOR. Ah! never may I be perforce a thrall  
To man! By heaven-directed flight I break  
The wayward plan of these detested nuptials.  
Arm justice on thy side, and with her aid  
Judge with that sanctity the gods demand.

PEL. No easy province : make not me your judge.  
Great though my power, it is not mine to act,  
I told thee so, without my people's voice  
Assenting ; lest, if ill arise, they say  
By honouring strangers thou hast undone thy country.

CHOR. Each equally allied, impartial Jove  
Weighs each in equal balance ; but repays  
The impious deed with vengeance, to the just  
Rewards their sanctity. Why griev'st thou then  
To emulate the god, and act with justice ?

PEL. Matter of high import hast thou proposed,  
Which not admits heady and fitful rashness,  
But deep deliberation, provident care,  
Wisely attentive to the general weal,  
That hence no evil rise, but the event,  
Be prosp'rous found, first to the State and me ;  
Next, that no force arrest you here, nor we  
Betray you refuged in these hallowed seats,  
The hostages of Heaven, and on our heads  
Call ruin and the vengeance of the gods  
That e'en in death acquits not. Seems not this  
Matter of deep debate, and public care?

CHOR. Deliberate then with prudent care :  
 To thy counsels take with thee  
 Heaven-commercing piety,  
 And be steadfast justice near.  
 Hark ! methinks I hear them say,  
 Do not, mighty king, betray  
 Wretched exiles wand'ring far.  
 See me not with ruffian hand,  
 Refuged at this shrine, profaned,  
 Learn what boist'rous man may dare.  
 See me not with ruffled vest  
 Rent unseemly from my breast,  
 Loose my tresses waving round,  
 Bridled with this golden brede,  
 Led, like a reluctant steed,  
 From the gods that guard this ground.  
 See each hallowed image here,  
 And the awful powers revere :  
 At thy feet thy suppliant laid,  
 Mighty monarch, hear and aid !  
 And know, to thee, thy house, thy rising race  
 Impartial justice shall repay the deed ;  
 With glory's radiant crown thy virtues grace,  
 And righteous Jove shall sanctify the meed.

PEL. Well ; I have paused, and pondered ; but each  
 thought

Tells me the fluctuating tide perforce  
 Will drive me on a war with these, or those :  
 And, like a ship with all its anchors out,  
 I must abide the storm : nor will this end  
 Without calamity, and loss, and woe.  
 When the rich house in desolation sinks,  
 Its wealth all wasted, bounteous Jove may raise  
 Its splendour to outshine its former state :



Or when the haughty tongue unseemly bolts  
 The bitter taunt that stings the anguished heart,  
 The balm of honied words may heal the wound.  
 But kindred blood to reek upon the dust—  
 No : let the altars blaze, and each due rite  
 Propitiate ev'ry god t' avert the ill.  
 Meanwhile I keep aloof, wishing t' appear  
 Ignorant of these disputes : and may th' event  
 Be fortunate beyond my expectation.

CHOR. Hear the last words of desperate modesty.

PEL. Have I not heard? Speak on, I will attend.

CHOR. Seest thou these braided zones that bind our robes?

PEL. Ornaments these that suit your female state.

CHOR. Know then the honest purpose these shall serve.

PEL. What would thy words intend? Explain thyself.

CHOR. If honour shall not guard this female train—

PEL. How can these binding zones secure your safety?

CHOR. Hanging new trophies on these images.

PEL. Mysterious are thy words ; speak plainly to me.

CHOR. To tell thee plainly then, I mean ourselves.

PEL. I hear the language of an anguished heart.

CHOR. Be sure of that : I speak our firm resolves.

PEL. On ev'ry side inevitable ills

Surround me, like a flood, whose dang'rous surge

Drives me into a vast and gulfy sea,

Where no kind harbour shelters from the storm.

Should I not yield you refuge, thou hast named

A deed of horror not to be surpassed :

If with Ægyptus' sons, whose veins are rich

With kindred blood, before our walls I try

The chance of war, what else but bitter loss

Can be th' event, when in a woman's cause

Men shed their warm blood on th' embattled plain?

Yet strong constraint compels me to revere

The wrath of Jove, whose hospitable power  
 Protects the suppliant, awfully severe.  
 And thou, age-honoured father of these virgins,  
 Take in thy hands these boughs, place them with speed  
 On other altars of our country gods ;  
 That all the citizens may see the signs  
 Of your arrival ; but of me be sure  
 Speak not a word : for this free people love  
 To tax authority with blame. Some eye  
 Perchance may melt with pity, and abhor  
 The boist'rous force of these injurious men ;  
 Hence shall you find more favour from the people ;  
 For nature prompts to succour the distressed.

DAN. This reverend, this benevolent regard  
 To strangers we receive with grateful honour.  
 But from thy train send with me some t' attend,  
 To guide me to the altars of your gods,  
 The guardians of your State, and to their shrines,  
 With safety through your streets ; for much unlike  
 Our form, our garb to yours ; nor does our Nile  
 See on its banks a race like those that tread  
 The verdant borders of your Inachus :  
 Hence insolence may dare the rude affront ;  
 The stranger friend by the friend's hand has bled.

PEL. Attend him ; he says well ; conduct his steps  
 Safe to the sacred shrines, seats of the gods,  
 Within our walls ; and, as you pass, avoid  
 Much talk with those you meet, guiding this stranger,  
 Who claims protection from our hallowed altars.

PELASGUS, CHORUS.

CHORUS. For him thou hast ordered well ; safe may he go  
 Appointed thus : but what becomes of me ?  
 What shall I do ? How wilt thou calm my fears ?

PEL. Leave here those boughs, the ensigns of your toils.

CHOR. I leave them as thy voice and hand directs.

PEL. Seest thou that unfenced grove? Take shelter there.

CHOR. How should th' unconsecrated grove protect me?

PEL. Let them have wings, we leave you not their prey.

CHOR. Than winged dragons they're more dreadful to us.

PEL. With better omens be thy words auspicious.

CHOR. No marvel if my mind sinks with its fears.

PEL. But a king's fear is ominous of ill.

CHOR. Be all thy words, be all thy actions happy!

PEL. Your father will not long be absent from you;

Meanwhile will I persuade th' assembled people,

If haply I may move them, to receive you

With generous pity: him will I instruct

How best t' address his speech. Await th' event,

And supplicate the gods, whose guardian power

Is worshipped here, to grant your hearts' warm wish.

This done, I will return; and may persuasion

Attend me, and good fortune speed my steps.

CHORUS.

*Strophe I.*

Might of the mighty, king of kings,  
Supremely blest amidst the blest above,  
Enthroned in glory righteous Jove,  
From whom perfection to the perfect springs,

Hear us, O hear our fond request,  
To pity melt each generous breast;  
View this bold outrage with indignant eye,  
And shield us from the injury:

O'ertake their proud barque on the purple main,  
Sink it with all its sable train;

Our female band with pity view, [drew.

And think from whose rich blood our honoured race we

*Antistrophe 1.*

If Argive Iö's blooming grace  
 Could e'er thy fond enamoured bosom move  
 To warm desire, and rapturous love,  
 The pleasing memory of her charms retrace.  
 From her our race divine we boast,  
 Not foreign to this Argive coast.  
 Her foot, in times of old, where now we tread,  
 Trod the flower-enamelled mead ;  
 And made with lowings loud the forests ring,  
 As from the bryze's tort'ring sting  
 O'er many a realm she wandered wide,  
 And dared the bounding waves, that world from world divide.

*Strophe 2.*

Found her foot rest on Asia's shore,  
 On pastoral Phrygia's, or on Lydia's plains.  
 Or Mysian Teuthra's wide domains ?  
 Wildly Cicilia's rugged mountains o'er,  
 Pamphylia's various tribes among,  
 Each ceaseless-flowing stream along,  
 Through corn-clad fields, and valleys ever green,  
 The hallowed haunts of beauty's queen,  
 That winged pest impelled her foot to rove,  
 To the divine, all fost'ring grove,  
 Through whose rich meads, impregn'd with snow  
 Tempered with torrid beams Nile's healthful waters flow.

*Antistrophe 2.*

The race that then possessed the land,  
 Struck with astonishment and pale affright,  
 Beheld the strange, prodigious sight :  
 Disdaining to be touched she trod the strand,

The likeness of the lowing race  
 Now soft'ning sweet to virgin grace  
 They saw, and trembled. All her toils at last,  
 Her wand'rings wild, her tortures past,  
 What gentle hand—eternal Lord 'twas thine ;  
 Thy gentle hand, thy power divine  
 Soothed, softly soothed her frantic fear,  
 And from her glowing cheek wiped sorrow's modest tear.

*Epode.*

Now thy pleasing force employ,  
 All be love, and all be joy.  
 Rising from the sweet embrace,  
 Worthy of his radiant race,  
     Smiles the auspicious boy.  
 Time prepares to stamp his name  
 Glorious in the roll of fame ;  
 Earth, through ev'ry raptured scene,  
 Hails th' ethereal son of Jove.  
 Who could charm Heaven's angry queen ?  
 Who her hostile hate remove ?  
 This the deed of Jove alone,  
     And this his genuine son.  
 To whom, for justice when I raise the strain,  
 To whom, save Jove, should I complain ?  
 Great, awful author of our ancient line,  
     Creative parent, independent lord,  
 Disposer of the world, righteous, benign,  
     Sovereign, above the highest high adored ;  
 Whene'er he deigns to grace some favoured head,  
 Easy alike to him the will, the word, the deed.

DANAUS, CHORUS.

DANAUS. Be of good courage, daughters ; a decree,  
Such as you wish, this generous State has passed.

CHOR. Dear to my soul, with grateful tidings fraught,  
Hail, reverend parent ! But inform us how  
Passed the decree ; what numbers favoured us ?

DAN. Not one discordant voice jarred in their counsels.  
The fire of youth glowed in these aged veins,  
When the whole people their uplifted hands  
Waved in the air, to witness their assent  
That we might be permitted here to dwell  
Free, unreclaimable, inviolate :  
That none presume, native or stranger, hence  
To lead us ; and should force be used, whoe'r  
Assists not, him the public sentence drives,  
With infamy, an exile from his country.  
This the Pelasgian king advised, to us  
Benevolent, declaring the fierce wrath  
Of Jove, protector of the supplicant,  
Could not permit this firm and prosp'rous State  
To flourish ; but such double insult, offered  
To ev'ry law of hospitality  
Sacred and civil, would with twofold vengeance  
Draw ruin on it. When the Argives heard  
These arguments of winning eloquence,  
Impatient of the usual forms, they gave  
With hands uplifted their concordant suffrage  
Friendly to us : thus Jove decreed th' event.

CHOR. Come then, my sisters, for these pious Argives  
Breathe we some pious prayer, whose solemn strain  
May reach the ear of Jove. And thou, supreme,  
God of the stranger, hear a stranger's voice  
Sincere, unblamed ; and ratify our vows !

*Strophe.*

Ye progeny of Jove, whose awful power  
     In yon ethereal plain  
 Fixes the glories of your reign,  
 Bend from your radiant seats your ear,  
 Attentive to a virgin's prayer,  
 And on this generous race your choicest blessings shower.  
 Never may war, whose wanton rage  
     The thundering falchion joys to wield,  
 Joys, when embattled hosts engage,  
     To mow with ruthless arm the field ;  
 Never with rude discordant roar  
 Affright the echoes of this shore ;  
     Never with hostile hand  
 Wave round these glittering towers the blazing brand.  
 Soft-eyed humanity dwells here,  
 That melting to the suppliant's tear  
     Asserts our hopeless cause ;  
 And spotless piety, whose breast  
 Submiss reveres Jove's high behest,  
     And hospitable laws.  
 Your sacred spirit inspires the free  
 To form the generous, bold decree,  
     And man's rude force disdain ;  
 To cast on Heaven's dread Lord their eye,  
 The terrors of his vengeance fly,  
     Nor scorn our female train :  
 He o'er the impious roof his thunders rolls,  
 And awful in his wrath appals the guilty souls.

*Antistrophe.*

Our kindred train, suppliants of holy Jove,  
     Pelasia's sons revere,  
 And make our wrongs their generous care.

For this at every hallowed shrine  
 Propitious be each power divine ;  
 For this beneath this solemn-shaded grove  
 Our raptured invocations rise,  
 And Heaven shall hear the pious strains.  
 Ah ! never may malignant skies  
 Blast the fresh glories of your plains :  
 Nor pestilence with poisonous breath,  
 Waste your thin towns with livid death :  
 Nor war's stern power deface  
 The blooming flowers that youth's fair season grace.  
 Still may your chiefs, a reverend band,  
 Around the hallowed altars stand ;  
 And ardent for the State  
 Pour the warm vow to Heaven's high Lord,  
 The great, the just ; whose will adored  
 With hoar law tempers fate.  
 Still rise new chiefs, a lengthened line  
 (Kind on their birth, Diana, shine !)  
 The brave, the wise, the good :  
 But never discord's dread alarms  
 Your madd'ning cities rouse to arms  
 And stain your streets with blood :  
 Nor pale disease her sickly dew display,  
 Touched by thy golden beams, ambrosial fount of day.

*Epode.*

Fav'ring seasons grace the year,  
 Crown with rich fruits your cultured plains ;  
 The joyful flock, the sportive steer,  
 Bound wanton o'er your wide domains.  
 Each immortal showering treasures,  
 Wake the soft melodious measures ;



Let the chastely-warbled lay  
 The Muses' rapture-breathing shell obey.  
 Firm may the honours of your laws remain,  
 And prudence in your counsels reign :  
 Just to yourselves, and to the stranger kind,  
 May peace to sleep consign the bloodless sword ;  
 Each honour to your country's gods assigned ;  
 Each laurelled shrine with hallowed rites adored ;  
 The parent's hoary head with reverence crowned ;  
 View this, ye righteous gods, and stretch protection round !

## DANAUS, CHORUS.

DANAUS. I like this well : wise are these votive strains.  
 But though your father brings unwelcome tidings,  
 New, and unlooked for, fear not you th' event.  
 From yon high mound, where first you suppliant stood,  
 I saw a ship, I marked its waving streamer,  
 Its swelling sails, and all its gallant trim :  
 Its prow with heedful eye observes its way,  
 Obedient to the helm that guides behind ;  
 Unfriendly sight ! the sailors too I marked,  
 Conspicuous in white robes their sable limbs.  
 Th' attendant vessels, proudly riding, sweep  
 The watery way ; she foremost near the land  
 Now furls her sails, and all the shouting crew  
 Bend to the eager oar. Behoves you now  
 Sedate and sage attention, nor neglect  
 These gods. I haste to bring their generous aid,  
 The patrons, the protectors of your cause.  
 Haply some herald may be sent, with charge  
 To claim you as their prize : it shall not be :  
 Fear not th' event : but should our aid come slow,  
 Forget not the protection of this place.  
 Be comforted : the day, the hour shall come,

When he, that dares affront the gods, shall feel  
Their chastening vengeance bursting on his head.

CHOR. How my frame trembles ! Ah ! my father, see  
With winged speed the ships arrive ; between  
No interval of time ; my stiffening limbs  
Are chained with fear, and ev'ry hope of safety,  
If safety lies in flying far, is lost.

DAN. Since this decree is passed, fear not, my child ;  
Argos, I know, will arm in your defence.

CHOR. Fatally fierce they are, and on their pride  
Destruction waits, and never-sated war,  
These sons of old Ægyptus, not to thee  
Unknown. E'en now their firm-compacted ships  
Black o'er the angry deep insulting ride,  
Eager to land their sable-tinctured hosts.

DAN. And they shall find a host, whose toil-strung arms  
Relax not in the sun's meridian heat.

CHOR. Forsake me not, ah ! leave me not alone,  
I pray thee, father ; a forsaken woman  
Is very weak : their wily, faithless minds,  
Like obscene crows, spare not the hallowed altar.

DAN. Now fair befall our cause, if their mad rage,  
Insulting thee, my child, insult the gods.

CHOR. Neither these tridents, nor this solemn scene  
Will awe them to refrain their impious hands.  
They scorn the gods, and with unhallowed force  
Rush madly on, like savage, rav'ning dogs.

DAN. But dogs, they say, yield to the mast'ring wolves ;  
And the soft reed to the firm-spiked corn.

CHOR. They have the force of wild and savage beasts ;  
We must escape them therefore, as we may.

DAN. Slow are th' advances of a naval train ;  
Slow the arrangements of the ships ; the care  
To fix the cables, slow ; th' experienced chiefs

Trust not too soon the biting anchor's hold,  
 If stationed where no harbour winds around :  
 And when the golden sun withdraws his beams,  
 The gloom of night brings many an anxious care ;  
 Nor dare they, till their vessels ride secure,  
 Attempt to land. But take thou heed, nor let  
 Thy fears impel thee to neglect the gods ;  
 But ask their aid. The State will not disdain  
 My age, that tells with youthful warmth its tidings.

CHORUS.

*Strophe 1.*

Ye rising hills, whose reverend heads  
 Majestic wave their awe-commanding shades,  
 What woes our shudd'ring souls await ?  
 Or flying on the wings of fear,  
 In some cavern dark and drear  
 Deep shall we plunge, and hide us from our fate ?  
 Oh, that I could as smoke arise,  
 That rolls its black wreaths through the air ;  
 Mix with the clouds, that o'er the skies  
 Show their light forms, and disappear :  
 Or like the dust be tossed  
 By ev'ry sportive wind, till all be lost !

*Antistrophe 1.*

Such thoughts in deep despair I roil,  
 The gloom of sorrow black'ning on my soul.  
 Ah, father, the vexed ocean round  
 What horrors struck thy aching sight !  
 Dismay, and pale affright,  
 And wild amazement sink me to the ground.

Shall then the base, detested band  
 With rude touch seize us for their own?  
 No: rather shall this daring hand  
 Prepare for death the conscious zone;  
 Rather in deep disdain  
 My pale shade sink to Pluto's dreary reign.

*Strophe 2.*

Oh, might I sit sublime in air,  
 Where wat'ry clouds the freezing snows prepare!  
 Or on a rock whose threatening brow,  
 Th' ærial vultures unreached seat,  
 In solitary state  
 Frowns ruinous o'er th' affrighted waste below:  
 Rolled headlong down its rugged side,  
 A mangled carcass let me lie,  
 Ere dragged a pale, unwilling bride,  
 Victim to sad necessity;  
 And my indignant heart  
 Feel the keen wounds of sorrow's tort'ring dart.

*Antistrophe 2.*

Throw me, ere that detested day,  
 To prowling dogs and rav'nous birds a prey.  
 No form of death affrights me now:  
 O thou, assigned the wretches' friend,  
 To bid his miseries end,  
 And in oblivion's balm to steep his woe;  
 Come, gentle death, ere that sad hour  
 Which drags me to the nuptial bed;  
 And let me find in thy soft power  
 A refuge from the force I dread;  
 Oh spread thy sable cloud,  
 And in its unpierced gloom our sorrows shroud!

*Epoëte.*

Higher let your voices rise,  
 And swell the choral descant to the skies,  
 Notes of such a lofty vein,  
 That gods may listen to the solemn strain!  
 Eternal Sire, from heaven's high throne,  
 If thy indignant eyeballs glow  
 With vengeance at foul deeds below,  
 Look down, thou sovereign of the world, look down :  
 Ægyptus' sons, a ruffian race,  
 Our flying footsteps chase ;  
 And on our trembling, weeping band  
 Advance to lay their vengeful hand :  
 Extend thy golden scales,  
 For without thee what mortal worth avails ?  
 By land, by sea,  
 They seek their prey ;  
 Oh ! ere they seize it, may the ruffians die !  
 Again I raise the mournful cry.  
 They come, they come, the haughty foes :  
 'These are but preludes to my woes,  
 To yon strong rampires bend your flight ;  
 By sea, by land they rush severe,  
 And with their stern and threat'ning air,  
 The softness of our sex affright.  
 Look down, thou sovereign of the world, and save !

## HERALD, CHORUS.

HERALD. Hence to the ship, hence with your utmost speed.

CHOR. No, never, never ; drag me, drag me, stab me.  
 Rend from these mangled limbs my bleeding head.

HER. Hence to the ship, abandoned wretches, hence,  
 That waits to waft you, with your injured lords,

O'er the wide billows of yon briny deep.  
 Haste, or this spear, with bridal garlands bound,  
 Taught a less gentle office, there shall place you  
 Smarting with many a wound ; there sit, and sigh.  
 No more, I charge you, of these froward moods,  
 Or force shall drive them from you.

CHOR.

Woe is me !

HER. Haste, quit these seats, haste to the ships, and go  
 Inviolate to the city of the pious.

CHOR. Ah ! never may these eyes again behold  
 That rich enlivening stream, which he who drinks  
 Feels his fresh blood dance lively in his veins.  
 My unpolluted life amidst these seats,  
 These sacred seats, old man, preserve me sacred.

HER. Nay, tell not me ; but to the ship, the ship,  
 Averse or not averse, quick shalt thou go ;  
 Or vengeance, chastening vengeance to thy feet  
 Add wings and up the barque's tall sides pursue thee.

CHOR. Ah woe, woe, woe ! Barbarian, may the winds  
 In all their fury hurl thee on the rocks  
 Of rough Cilicia's brow ; or dash thy corse  
 An outcast on the swelling sands beneath.

HER. Cry, shriek, invoke the gods ; yet shalt thou not  
 Escape the ship of Ægypt ; louder shriek,  
 Cry woe, and woe : if the name please thee, take it.

CHOR. Ah wretched me ! Pollution of the land,  
 How fierce he yells ! Insolent wretch, away,  
 Thy rude touch wounds me : for this ruffian force,  
 Rise, mighty Nile, whelm him beneath thy floods !

HER. Hence, I command you ; to the rolling vessel  
 Instantly hence : if one presumes to linger,  
 I pay no reverence to your crisped locks,  
 This hand perforce shall drag her by her tresses.

CHOR. Ah me, immortal Sire ! Insolent force

Will hurry me away : it drags me now  
 Entangled in its nets ; and all my hopes  
 Are vanished like a dream, a dusky dream.  
 Earth, I adjure thee, shield me ; shield me, Jove,  
 God of this land ; save me in this hard conflict.

HER. Gods of this land ! They awe not me ; my youth  
 They nourished not, nor to old age upheld me.

CHOR. Near me the serpent rolls his train, and soon  
 Will, like a pois'nous viper, dart upon me.  
 Earth, I adjure thee, shield me ; shield me, Jove,  
 God of this land ; save me in this hard conflict.

HER. If one of you perversely lingers here,  
 Your richly purpled stoles shall find no mercy.

CHOR. Ye rulers of the city, force o'erpowers me.

HER. You shall see many rulers, doubt not, soon,  
 Ægyptus' sons ; no anarchy is here.

CHOR. Unlooked-for ruin comes, O king, upon us.

HER. I must use force, I see, and pluck you hence  
 Dragged by the locks, since my words move you not.

PELASGUS, HERALD, CHORUS.

PELASGUS. Whence these outrageous deeds ? How dares  
 thy pride

Offer this insult to the land, where dwell  
 Pelasgian men ? Or didst thou deem that women  
 Alone inhabit here ? Thy savage acts,  
 Barbarian, touch the dignity of Greece.  
 Learn thy mistake then, and thine high offence.

HER. Against what law, what right have I offended ?

PEL. First, dost thou know thou art a stranger here ?

HER. A stranger here I found what I had lost.

PEL. To whom hast thou addressed thee for protection ?

HER. To Mercury, who directs the stranger's search.

PEL. The gods ! Thou hast no reverence for the gods.

HER. Yes, for the gods of Nile, a holy reverence.

PEL. But none for these, if right I understand thee.

HER. These lead I hence; and who shall take them  
from me?

PEL. Dare but to touch them, dear shalt thou abide it.

HER. Is this your hospitality to strangers?

PEL. I owe the ruffian none, that robs the gods.

HER. Go then, announce this to Ægyptus' sons.

PEL. It suits not me; my soul disdains the office.

HER. Then let me speak, and plainly; it becomes  
A herald's office to speak all things plain.

How ruffians, say, how robbers of the gods,  
This kindred train, that comes to claim these women?

Not by the voice of evidence does Mars  
Decide these things; nor for a mulct of gold  
Compound the dreadful quarrel; ere it ends  
Many shall shed their dear blood in the dust,  
Many lie low on earth, and bite the ground.

PEL. Hear then what honour prompts, what justice dictates,  
And bear it to the partners of thy voyage.

If these approve, if their free will incline them,  
Lead them, if gentle words win their assent.

This firm decree the suffrage of the State  
Has rendered sacred, not by force to yield

A train of females; this resolve, be sure,  
Is strongly fixed, and never can be shaken.

Though not engraved on tablets, nor enrolled  
In seal-stamped volumes, my free voice declares it

In words of plainest import. Take thy answer;  
Hence from my sight; with thy best speed be gone.

HER. Know then a rising war awaits thy choice;  
Valour and conquest crown the helms of men.

PEL. You shall be met by men, whose lively blood  
Dull draughts of barley wine have never clogged.



Now virgins, with your train of faithful friends,  
Dismiss your fears ; enter this town, whose walls  
Strong-built, and crowned with many a bulwark, lift  
Their towered heads impregnable : within  
The State has many structures ; nor is mine  
A thin inhabitation ; such a house,  
Where cheerful numbers live in wealth and splendour,  
May haply please you : if a private mansion,  
To your own use devote, be more your wish ;  
The best of these, the most approved, is yours ;  
Make your free choice : I will protect you ; all  
This friendly State, supporting their decree,  
Will shield you. What, wish you more powerful guardians ?

CHOR. For these thy bounties may the bounteous gods  
Shower blessings on thy head, thou gen'rous king  
Of brave Pelasgia ! But benevolent  
Send us our father Danaus, on whose firm  
And provident counsels we rely. His care  
And sage advice is needful, where to choose  
Our dwelling, our secure retreat. The tongue  
Of slander is too prompt with wanton malice  
To wound the stranger : act we then with caution.

PEL. With honour, lovely virgins, with the voice  
Of fair-applauding fame amidst our city  
Shall your appointment be, where'er your father  
Assigns to each her mansion and attendants.

## DANAUS, CHORUS.

DANAUS. Daughters, it well becomes you to these  
As to th' immortal gods, to offer vows, [Argives,  
Libation, sacrifice, and ev'ry rite  
Religion knows ; so liberal their protection,  
So readily they lent their friendly ears,  
And favoured all my deeds against these youths,

These kindred youths, whose headlong pride thus haunts  
you.

Behold these spears around, to me assigned  
An honourable guard, that no rude hand  
With barb'rous rage may lift the secret sword,  
And with my blood pollute the pious land.  
This grace, this condescension claims my thanks,  
And you with grateful minds honour it ever.  
To all the wise instructions of your father,  
Graved in your faithful tablets, grave these also,  
That after-times may hold this stranger train  
In reverence. Know then this, the tongue of malice  
Is ever prompt to wound the stranger's fame  
With stings of infamy : I charge you then  
Disgrace me not. I see your blooming age,  
Enforcing soft desire ; I know how hard  
To guard the lovely flowers that grace that season.  
Beasts love to riot on their sweets, and man,  
Each insect, and each wanton-winged bird.  
The Queen of Love proclaims their opening bloom ;  
Ah, would she suffer it to remain uncropt ?  
And on the delicate tints, that kindling glow  
On beauty's vermeil cheek, each roving youth  
With melting wishes darts the amorous glance.  
We brook not this ; else why these various toils,  
These wand'rings o'er the wide-extended main ?  
Let us not work this scandal to ourselves,  
And triumph to our foes. Two mansions here  
Are offered to your choice ; Pelagus one  
Would give, and one the State ; beneath whose roof  
No male attendant waits : the choice is easy.  
Only observe these precepts of your father,  
And guard with heedful care your virgin honour.

CHOR. O may the powers of Heaven in all besides

Be gracious to us ; in our virgin honour  
 Have confidence : be their high wills unchanged,  
 I shall not deviate from my mind's fixed plan.

CHOR. Go then, ye pure, ye pious train,  
 In triumph go to those blessed powers  
 That o'er this State extend their reign  
 Imperial guardians of these towers ;  
 Imperial guardians of these glades,  
 Along whose hallowed shades  
 His dark'ning stream old Erasinus rolls :  
 With courage arm your souls.  
 No more to Nile's deep floods belong  
 The warbled voice, the raptured song ;  
 Our praise Pelasgia's towns demand ;  
 And each fresh fount, that loves to lead  
 His humid train through grove, through mead,  
 And rolls luxuriance through the land.  
 Virgin Diana, bend thine eye,  
 And piteous of a virgin's woes,  
 O save ensnared chastity,  
 From the rude touch of hated foes :  
 Nor see thy struggling vot'ries led  
 Where Venus decks the bed !  
 Nor, Queen of Love, shall our mellifluous lays  
 Be silent in thy praise :  
 For thou, next Heaven's imperial queen,  
 In highest grace with Jove art seen,  
 And mighty deeds declare thy power :  
 The passions hear thy soft control ;  
 Thy sweet voice melts the willing soul,  
 Enchanted with thy honied lore.

Round thee, where'er thou lead'st the way,  
 Joyful the frolic Cupids rove ;

And as their antic sports they play,  
Whisper the harmony of love.

But what have I with love or joy?

My peace wild fears annoy,  
The miseries of flight, pursuit's alarms,  
And slaughter-threat'ning arms :  
Why else the quick, the fav'ring gales  
Waft o'er the waves their flying sails?

SEMICHOR. This is the fixed decree of fate ;  
And thus high Heaven's unbounded Lord,  
Pronounced th' irrevocable word,  
And doomed us to the nuptial state.

CHOR. Ah ! never may his sovereign will  
Me to Ægyptus' sons unite !

SEMICHOR. 'This is to grasp at shadows still,  
And soothe thy soul with vain delight.

CHOR. Know'st thou his will ? Or has thine eye  
Looked through futurity ?

SEMICHOR. His mind I dare not scan, immense, profound :

And thou thy wishes bound ;  
'Gainst Heaven's high will exclaim no more,  
But in mute meekness learn t' adore.

CHOR. Almighty Sire, whose healing hand  
Soothed thy loved Iö's soul to rest,  
With comfort cheer this sorrowing breast,  
And save us from this hostile band !

For me through Fortune's cloud Hope beams her ray,  
And from that bright'ning part goes bright'ning on ;  
So right succeeding right shall force its way,  
And the good gods complete what Greece begun.

THE  
SEVEN CHIEFS AGAINST THEBES.

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BESIDES this Siege of Thebes, Æschylus wrote three tragedies on the subjects of Laius, Œdipus, and the Sphinx, which are lost. Woe to the ravenous jaws of time, that have devoured these precious morsels of antiquity; we should otherwise have had from this great master a regular, and, no doubt, an interesting account of this illustrious and unfortunate family. It is said that Æschylus particularly valued himself upon this tragedy: not without reason; for it has all that bold painting with which we might expect his martial genius would embellish such a subject. Always magnificent, he has fixed the scene in Thebes before the principal temple: the clash of arms, the neighing of the horses, and the shouts of the soldiers are heard: Eteocles appears surrounded with the citizens, whom he animates to defend the walls: in the meantime the Chorus, which is composed of Theban ladies, distracted with their fears, are hanging on the statues of the gods that adorn the area before the temple. Longinus has remarked on the sublimity of the dialogue; it is worthy an experienced veteran and a brave young king arming in defence of his crown, his life, and his honour; it is worthy of Æschylus. The characters of the Seven Chiefs that command in the attack are exquisitely

marked and varied; and their impetuous ferocity is admirably contrasted with the calm and deliberate courage of those appointed to oppose them. The shields of six of these chiefs are charged with armorial bearings expressive of their characters, and as regular as if they had been marshalled by a herald-at-arms: the impresses are devised with a fine imagination and wonderful propriety.

The judicious choice of the persons of the Chorus forms one of the principal graces of this tragedy, as it gave the poet an opportunity of mixing the natural timidity of the female character with the animated and fiery daring of heroes, the fears of these daughters of Cadmus presenting nothing to their imagination but the scenes of distress and horror which the insolence of conquest spreads through a vanquished and plundered city, and this painted in the warmest colours, in the strongest style of Æschylus.

Besides the intrinsic beauty of this tragedy, which is very striking, it has to us this further merit, that it gave birth to three of the finest poems of antiquity, the *Antigone* of Sophocles, the *Phœnissæ* of Euripides, and the *Thebaid* of Statius.

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PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

ETEOCLES.		ISMENE.
SOLDIER.		HERALD.
ANTIGONE.		CHORUS OF THEBAN VIRGINS.

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ETEOCLES, CHORUS.

ETEOCLES. Ye citizens of Cadmus, it behoves  
 The man that guides the helm of State, to speak  
 What the sad times require; nor suffer sleep  
 To weigh his eyelids down. For if success  
 Attends our toils, to the good gods we bow,

The authors of the blessing : should misfortune,  
Avert it, Heaven ! befall, Eteocles  
Shall hear his name alone wide through the city  
Insulted by each tongue, that vents its spleen  
In mutinous reproach, or loud laments :  
From which may Jove, the guardian of our State.  
Defend the sons of Cadmus ! But this hour  
Calls on you all, whether your flow'ry spring  
Yet wants the prime of manhood, or your age  
Puts forth its firmest strength, t' exert your powers.  
Well it becomes you, to defend the city,  
The altars of the gods presiding here  
(Ah, never may their honours be effaced !)  
Your children, and this land, your common parent.  
And dearest nurse, who on her fost'ring soil  
Upheld with bounteous care your infant steps,  
And trained you to this service, that your hands  
In her defence might lift the faithful shield.  
E'en to this day indeed the gods incline  
To favour us ; and though so long innured  
Within our rampires, each bold work of war  
Hath prospered in our hands. But now the seer,  
That listens to the flight of birds, and thence  
Forms in his prescient mind the sure presage,  
Guiltless of fire, from their oracular wings  
Draws his deep skill, and warns us that the powers  
Of Greece, combined against us, in the night  
Advancing, meditate the dark assault.  
Haste all then to the walls, haste to the bulwarks  
With all your arms, fill every tower, secure  
Each pass, stand firm at every gate, be bold,  
Nor fear th' assailing numbers : Heaven is with us.  
Meanwhile on every quarter have I sent  
To observe their forces, and descry their march :

By these, nôt charged, I trust, in vain to watch,  
Informed I guard against the wiles of war.

SOLDIER, ETEOCLES, CHORUS.

SOLDIER. Illustrious king of Thebes, I bring thee tidings  
Of firm assurance from the foe ; these eyes  
Beheld each circumstance. Seven valiant chiefs  
Slew on the black-orbed shield the victim bull,  
And, dipping in the gore their furious hands,  
In solemn oath attest the god of war,  
Bellona, and the carnage-loving power  
Of terror, sworn from their firm base to rend  
These walls, and lay their ramparts in the dust ;  
Or, dying, with their warm blood steep this earth.  
Each in Adrastus' car some dear remembrance  
Piled to their distant parents, whilst their eyes  
Dropped tears, but on their face was no remorse.  
Each soul of iron glowing with the rage  
Of valour, as the lion when he glares  
Determined battle. What I now relate  
Sleeps not, nor lingers : round the urn I left them,  
By lot deciding to what gate each chief  
Shall lead his forces. These against select  
The best, the bravest of the sons of Thebes,  
And instant at the gates assign their stations.  
For all in arms the Argive host comes on  
Involved in dust, and from the snorting steeds  
The thick foam falls, and dews the whitened fields.  
Be thine the provident pilot's gen'rous care,  
Guard well the town, ere yet the storm assails it ;  
E'en now the waves of war roar o'er the plain :  
Seize then this fair occasion, instant seize it.  
My faithful eye this day shall hold the watch,  
That well informed, no danger may surprise thee.



ETE. O Jove, O Earth, O all ye guardian gods ;  
And thou dread curse, the fury of my father,  
Of fatal power, O rend not from its roots  
This ruined city by th' insulting foe  
Trampled in dust, her sweet Helladian tongue  
Silent, and all her sacred fires extinct !  
Ah ! never let this land, this town of Cadmus  
Bend her free neck beneath the servile yoke !  
Protect her, save her ; as you share her honours  
I plead : a flourishing State reveres the gods.

CHOR. Woe, woe, intolerable woe !  
Fierce from their camps the hosts advance,  
Before their march with thund'ring tread  
Proud o'er the plain their fiery coursers prance,  
And hither bend their footsteps dread :  
Yon cloud of dust that chokes the air,  
A true though tongueless messenger,  
Marks plain the progress of the foe.  
And now the horrid clash of arms,  
That, like the torrent, whose impetuous tide  
Roars down the mountain's craggy side,  
Shook the wide fields with fierce alarms,  
With nearer terrors strikes our souls,  
And through our chaste recesses rolls :  
Hear, all ye powers of Heaven, propitious hear,  
And check the furies of this threat'ning war !

The crowded walls around  
Loud clamours rend the sky ;  
Whilst ranged in deep array th' embattled powers  
Their silver shields lift high,  
And, level with the ground  
To lay their rampired heads, assail our towers.  
What guardian god shall I implore ?

Bending at what sacred shrine  
 Call from their happy seats what powers divine,  
 And suppliant ev'ry sculptured form adore ?  
 The time demands it : why then, why delay ?—  
 The sound of arms, swells on my affrighted ear.—  
 Hold now the pall, the garland, as you pray.—  
 Hark ! 'tis the rude clash of no single spear.

Stern god of war,  
 Dost thou prepare  
 Thy sacred city to betray ?  
 Look down, look down ;  
 O save thine own ;  
 Nor leave us to the foe a prey :  
 If e'er thy soul had pleasure in the brave,  
 God of the golden helm, hear us, and save !

And all ye powers, whose guardian care  
 Protects these walls, this favoured land,  
 O hear these pious, suppliant strains ;  
 Propitious aid us, aid a virgin band,  
 And save us from the victor's chains !  
 For all around with crested pride  
 High waves the helm's terrific tide,  
 Tossed by the furious breath of war.  
 And thou, great Jove, almighty Sire,  
 Confound with foul defeat these Argive powers  
 Whose arms insult our leaguered towers,  
 And fright our souls with hostile fire.  
 The reins that curb their proud steeds 'round,  
 Rattle, and death is in the sound :  
 'Gainst our seven gates seven chiefs of high command,  
 In arms spear-proof, take their appointed stand.

Daughter of Jove, whose soul  
 Glows at th' embattled plain :

And thou by whom the pawing steed arose,  
Great monarch of the main  
Curbed by thy strong control ;  
From our fears free us, free us from our foes !  
On thee, stern Mars, again I call :  
Haste thee, god, and with thee bring  
The Queen of Love, from whose high race we spring ;  
If Cadmus e'er was dear, defend his wall !  
Thou terror of the savage Phœbus, hear,  
In all thy terrors rush upon the foe !  
Chaste virgin-huntress, goddess ever dear,  
Wing the keen arrow from thy ready bow !  
Hark ! fraught with war  
The groaning car,  
Imperial Juno shakes the ground !  
Fierce as they pass,  
The wheels of brass,  
Dear virgin-huntress ! roar around :  
The gleaming lustre of the brandished spear  
Glares terribly across the troubled air.  
Alas my country ! must these eyes,  
Must these sad eyes behold thy fall ?  
Ah, what a storm of stones, that flies,  
And winged with ruin smites the wall !  
O Phœbus ! at each crowded gate  
Begins the dreadful work of fate ;  
Each arm the thund'ring talchion wields,  
And clashes on the sounding shields.  
O thou, whose kind and matchless might,  
Blest Onca, through the glowing fight  
Obedient conquest joys t' attend,  
All our seven gates, dread queen, defend !  
And all ye mighty, guardian powers,  
That here preside, protect our towers :

Nor the war-wasted town betray,  
 'To fierce and dissonant foes a prey!  
 Ye gods, deliverers of this land,  
 To whom we stretch the suppliant hand,  
 Hear us, O hear our virgin prayer,  
 And show that Thebes is yet your care!  
 By every solemn temple, every shrine,  
 Each hallowed orgie, and each rite divine,  
 Each honour to your power in reverence paid,  
 Hear us, ye guardian gods, hear us, and aid!

ETEOCLES, CHORUS.

ETE. It is not to be borne, ye wayward race:  
 Is this your best, is this the aid you lend  
 The State, the fortitude with which you steel  
 The souls of the besieged, thus falling down  
 Before these images to wail, and shriek  
 With lamentations loud? Wisdom abhors you.  
 Nor in misfortune, nor in dear success,  
 Be woman my associate: if her power  
 Bears sway, her insolence exceeds all bounds  
 But if she fears, woe to that house and city.  
 And now, by holding counsel with weak fear,  
 You magnify the foe, and turn our men  
 To flight: thus are we ruined by ourselves.  
 This ever will arise from suffering women  
 To intermix with men. But mark me well,  
 Whoe'er henceforth dares disobey my orders,  
 Be it or man or woman, old or young,  
 Vengeance shall burst upon him, the decree  
 Stands irreversible, and he shall die.  
 War is no female province, but the scene  
 For men: hence, home; nor spread your mischiefs here.  
 Hear you, or not? Or speak I to the deaf?

CHOR. Dear to thy country, son of *Cædipus*,  
My soul was seized with terror, when I heard  
The rapid car roll on, its whirling wheels  
Grating harsh thunder ; and the iron curb  
Incessant clashing on the barbed steed.

ETE. What ! should the pilot, when the labouring barque  
Scarce rides the swelling surge, forsake the helm,  
And seek his safety from the sculptured prow ?

CHOR. Yet therefore to these ancient images,  
Confiding in their sacred power, I ran,  
When at the gates sharp sleet of arrowy shower  
Drove hard ; my fears impelled me to implore  
The blest gods to protect the city's strength.

ETE. Pray that our towers repel the hostile spear.

CHOR. This shall the gods——

ETE. The gods, they say, prepare  
To quit their seats, and leave a vanquished town.

CHOR. Ah, never, whilst I breathe the vital air,  
May their blest train forsake us ; nor these eyes  
Behold destruction raging through our streets,  
And in fierce flames our stately structures blaze !

ETE. Let not these invocations of the gods  
Make you improvident ; remember rather  
Obedience is the mother of success,  
Wedded to safety : so the wise assure us.

CHOR. Yet in the gods is a superior power,  
Which often in afflictions clears away  
Th' impenetrable cloud, whose sullen gloom  
Sharp misery hung before our darkened eyes.

ETE. The victim, and the hallowed sacrifice,  
When the foes menace, are the task of men ;  
Thine, to be silent, and remain at home.

CHOR. That we possess our city yet unconquered,  
That yet our towers repel th' assailing foe,

Is from the gods : from them our voice calls down  
Further success. Why should this move thy anger ?

ETE. It does not, virgin : no ; your pious vows  
I blame not. But be silent ; lest thy fears,  
Swelling to this excess, dismay cur youth.

CHOR. Affrighted at the sudden din of war,  
And trembling with my fears, with hasty foot  
I sought this citadel, this sacred seat.

ETE. If haply now your eyes behold the dead,  
Or wounded ; burst not forth in loud laments :  
For blood and carnage is the food of war.

CHOR. Distinct I hear the fiery-neighing steed.

ETE. Whate'er thou hear'st, it asks not thy attention.

CHOR. The city shakes beneath th' enclosing foes.

ETE. Be satisfied : to guard it is my charge.

CHOR. I fear : the clash is louder at the gates.

ETE. Peace ; nor distract the city with thy cries.

CHOR. Ye social powers, leave not our walls defenceless.

ETE. Woe on thee ! Canst thou not bear this in silence ?

CHOR. Gods of this State, save me from slavery !

ETE. Me wouldst thou make a slave, and all the State.

CHOR. All-powerful Jove, turn on the foe the sword !

ETE. Heavens, of what quality are women formed ?

CHOR. Wretched, as men are, in their country's ruin.

ETE. Still wail thy country ? Still embrace these gods ?

CHOR. Wild with my fears, I speak I know not what.

ETE. Wouldst thou indulge me in a light request ?

CHOR. Speak it at once, quickly shall I obey.

ETE. Be silent, wretch ; nor terrify thy friends.

CHOR. I will ; and with them bear what fate decrees.

ETE. I praise thy resolution. Clasp no more  
These images ; but stand apart, and ask  
Happier events ; entreat the friendly gods  
To aid us. Hear my vows ; then instant raise

The heaven-appeasing Pæan, whose high strains  
Of solemn import, 'midst her sacred rites,  
Greece pours symphonious ; strains that raise the soul  
To generous courage, and the fixed disdain  
Of fear and danger. To the guardian gods  
Whose tutelary power protects our fields,  
Protects our crowded streets ; to Dirce's fount ;  
Nor thee, Ismenus, will I pass unhonoured ;  
If conquest crowns our helms, and saves our city,  
The hallowed sacrifice shall bleed, and load  
Their smoking altars ; this victorious hand  
Shall raise the glittering trophies, and hang high,  
To grace their sacred walls, the rich-wrought vests,  
Spoils of the war, rent from the bleeding foe.  
Breathe to the gods these vows : but let no sigh  
Break forth, no lamentation rude and vain :  
Weak is their power to save thee from thy fate.  
My charge shall be at our seven gates to fix  
Six of our bravest youth, myself the seventh,  
In dreadful opposition to the foe ;  
Ere yet the violent and tumultuous cry  
Calls me perforce to join the fiery conflict.

CHORUS.

I. I.

I would obey thee ; but my breast  
Yet pants with fear and knows not rest ;  
Too near my heart distracting care  
Wakes all the horrors of despair :  
And as the trembling dove, whose fears  
Keep watch in her uneasy bower,  
Thinks in each rustling leaf she hears  
The serpent gliding to devour,

I tremble at each sullen sound  
 Of clashing arms, that roars around :  
 With all their troops, with all their powers,  
 Fierce they advance to storm our towers ;  
 Now hurtling in the darkened sky,  
     What does my cruel fate prepare !  
 Rude, battering stones incessant fly,  
     And all the missive storm of war.

## I. 2.

Guard, ye great gods, O guard our wall,  
 Nor let the towers of Cadmus fall !  
 Ah ! to what fairer, richer plain  
 Your radiant presence will you deign,  
 These fields abandoned to the foes,  
     Through whose crisped shades and smiling meads,  
 Jocundly warbling as she goes,  
     Dirce her liquid treasures leads,  
 And boasts that Tethys never gave,  
 Nor all her nymphs, a purer wave !  
 Deign then, ye gods that guard this land,  
 Here deign to take your hallowed stand :  
 Assert your glory : on the foe  
     Pour rout, and havoc, and dismay,  
 Confusion wild, soul-with'ring woe,  
     And flight, that flings his arms away.

## I. 3.

Hear then the mournful, solemn strain :  
 For dreadful were its fate, should this strong wall,  
     'This ancient, rampired city fall,  
 And spread its light dust o'er th' encumbered plain,  
     Beneath the proud Achaian spear,  
 Dishonoured sunk, the waste of war.



Should the fresh virgin's bloom, the matron's age,  
By the fierce victor's fiery rage,  
Their robes all rent, their bleeding bosoms bare,  
Be dragged by their loose-flowing hair,  
Like horses, a reluctant prize ;  
The desolated streets re-echoing to their cries ?

II. 1.

Before my sad presaging soul  
What scenes of imaged horror roll !  
I see the tender virgin's woe,  
Ere yet her ripened beauties glow ;  
The hateful way I see her tread,  
Forcibly torn from her sweet home :  
Happier, far happier are the dead ;  
They rest within the silent tomb.  
But, the walls humbled to the ground,  
What dreadful miseries rage around !  
Furious one leads the vengeful bands ;  
One stains with blood his reeking hands ;  
Wide roll, outrageous to destroy,  
The dusky smoke, and torrent fires ;  
Whilst slaught'ring Mars with hideous joy  
The heaven-contemning rage inspires.

II. 2.

From house to house, from street to street,  
The crashing flames roar round, and meet ;  
Each way the fiery deluge preys,  
And girds us with the circling blaze.  
The brave, that 'midst these dire alarms  
For their lost country greatly dare,  
And fired with vengeance rush to arms,  
Fall victims to the blood-stained spear.

The bleeding babe, with innocent cries,  
 Drops from his mother's breast, and dies.  
 See rapine rushes, bent on prey,  
 His hasty step brooks no delay.  
 The spoiler, loaded with his store,  
     Envious the loaded spoiler views ;  
 Disdains another should have more,  
     And his insatiate toil renews.

## II. 3.

Thick on the earth the rich spoil lies :  
 For the rude plunderer's restless-rolling tide,  
     Their worthless numbers waving wide,  
 Drop in their wild haste many a glitt'ring prize.  
     Whilst, in her chaste apartment bred,  
     The trembling virgin captive led,  
 Pours, in the anguish of her soul, the tear :  
     And, torn from all her heart holds dear,  
 The youthful bride, a novice yet in woe,  
     Obeys the haughty, happy foe.  
     But ere such horrors blast my sight,  
 May these sad eyes close in eternal night !

SEMICHOR. See, from his watch the veteran returns,  
 Bearing, I ween, fresh tidings from yon host,  
 Of highest import : quick his foot, and hasty.  
 This way, behold, the son of Œdipus,  
 The king himself advances, pressing on  
 His hurried step to learn their new-formed measures.

## ETEOCLES, SOLDIER, CHORUS.

SOLDIER. Now I can tell thee, for I know it well,  
 The disposition of the foe, and how  
 Each at our gates takes his allotted post.  
 Already near the Prætian gate in arms

Stands Tydeus raging ; for the prophet's voice  
Forbids his foot to pass Ismenus' stream,  
The victims not propitious : at the pass  
Furious, and eager for the fight, the chief,  
Fierce as the dragon when the mid-day sun  
Calls forth his glowing terrors, raves aloud,  
Reviles the sage, as forming tim'rous league  
With war and fate. Frowning he speaks, and shakes  
The dark crest streaming o'er his shaded helm  
In triple wave ; whilst dreadful ring around  
The brazen bosses of his shield, impressed  
With this proud argument. A sable sky  
Burning with stars ; and in the midst full-orbed  
A silver moon, the eye of night, o'er all  
Awful in beauty pours her peerless light.  
Clad in these proud habiliments, he stands  
Close to the river's margin, and with shouts  
Demands the war, like an impatient steed,  
That pants upon the foaming curb, and waits  
With fiery expectation the known signal,  
Swift at the trumpet's sound to burst away.  
Before the Prætian gate, its bars removed,  
What equal chief wilt thou appoint against him ?

ETE. This military pride, it moves not me :  
The gorgeous blazonry of arms, the crest  
High waving o'er the helm, the roaring boss,  
Harmless without the spear, imprint no wound.  
The sable night, spangled with golden stars,  
On his proud shield impressed, perchance may prove  
A gloomy presage. Should the shades of night  
Fall on his dying eyes, the boastful charge  
May to the bearer be deemed ominous,  
And he the prophet of his own destruction.  
Against his rage the son of Astacus,

That breathes deliberate valour, at that gate  
 Will I appoint commander ; bent on deeds  
 Of glory, but a votary at the shrine  
 Of modesty, he scorns the arrogant vaunt  
 As base, but bids brave actions speak his worth.  
 The flower of that bold stem, which from the ground  
 Rose armed, and fell not in the deathful fight,  
 Is Menalippus ; him his parent earth  
 Claims as her own, and in her natural right  
 Calls him to guard her from the hostile spear :  
 But the brave deed the die of war decides.

CHOR. Go then, my guardian hero, go ;  
 And may each fav'ring god with bright success  
 Thy gen'rous valour bless :  
 For at thy country's dear command  
 Thou arm'st thy righteous hand,  
 To pour her vengeance on the foe.  
 Yet my sad heart must sigh,  
 When on the blood-empurpled ground,  
 Gored with many a gaping wound,  
 I see my dearest friends expiring lie.

SOL. May the gods crown his valiant toil with conquest.  
 But Capaneus against th' Electran gates  
 Takes his allotted post, and tow'ring stands  
 Vast as the earth-born giants, and inflamed  
 To more than mortal daring : horribly  
 He menaces the walls ; may Heaven avert  
 His impious rage ! vaunts that, the gods assenting  
 Or not assenting, his strong hand shall rend  
 Their rampires down ; that e'en the rage of Jove  
 Descending on the field should not restrain him.  
 His lightnings, and his thunders winged with fire,  
 He likens to the sun's meridian heat.  
 On his proud shield portrayed, a naked man

Waves in his hand a blazing torch ; beneath  
In golden letters, I WILL FIRE THE CITY.  
Against this man— But who shall dare t' engage  
His might, and dauntless his proud rage sustain ?

ETE. Advantage from advantage here arises.  
The arrogant vaunts, which man's vain tongue throws out,  
Shall on himself recoil. This haughty chief  
Threats high, and prompt to execute his threats  
Spurns at the gods, opes his unhallowed lips  
In shallow exultations, hurls on high,  
Weak mortal as he is, 'gainst Jove himself  
Hurls his extravagant and wild defiance.  
On him, I trust, the thunder winged with fire,  
Far other than the sun's meridian heat,  
Shall roll its vengeance. But against his pride,  
Insolent vaunter, shall the glowing spirit,  
That burns for glory in the daring breast  
Of Polyphontes, be opposed : his arm,  
Strong in Diana's tutelary aid,  
Shall be a sure defence. But to thy tale ;  
Who next before our gates assumes his station ?

CHOR. Yes, let him perish, the proud foe,  
That storms, in savage hope, the vanquished town,  
And rends its rampires down.  
Him first may Heaven's almighty Sire,  
Rolling his vengeful fire,  
Dash in the flaming ruin low ;  
Ere his impetuous spear  
Bursts every bar of my retreat,  
And from my virgin seat  
Drags me perforce from all my soul holds dear.

SOL. Third from the brazen helm leaped forth the lot  
Of fierce Eteoclus, who takes his post  
Against the gates of Neis : there he whirls

His fiery-neighing steeds, that toss their heads  
 Proud of their nodding plumes, eager to rush  
 Against the gates, and snorting, champ their curbs  
 Bossed with barbaric pride. No mean device  
 Is sculptured on his shield, a man in arms,  
 His ladder fixed against the enemy's walls,  
 Mounts, resolute to rend their rampires down ;  
 And cries aloud, the letters plainly marked  
 NOT MARS HIMSELF SHALL BEAT ME FROM THE TOWERS.  
 Appoint of equal hardihood some chief  
 To guard the city from the servile yoke.

ETE. Such shall I send, to conquest send him ; one  
 That bears not in his hand this pageantry  
 Of martial pride. The hardy Megareus,  
 From Creon sprung, and that bold race, which rose  
 Embattled from the earth : him from the gates  
 The furious neighings of the fiery steeds  
 Affright not ; but his blood spilt on the earth  
 Amply requites the nouriture she gave him,  
 Or captive both, the man in arms, the town  
 Stormed on the sculptured shield, and the proud bearer,  
 Shall with their spoils adorn his father's house.

CHOR. Go then, and glory be thy guide !  
 For thee, brave youth, we pour this ardent prayer,  
 And fav'ring Heaven shall hear.  
 Go then, my house's guardian, go,  
 And rushing on the foe,  
 Bravely repel their vaunting pride.  
 And as each furious soul  
 Hurls the ferocious menace high,  
 May he, that rules the sky,  
 In vengeance his indignant eyeballs roll !

SOL. At the next gate, named from the martial goddess  
 Onca Minerva, stands Hippomedon.

I heard his thund'ring voice, I saw his form  
 In bulk and stature proudly eminent ;  
 I saw him roll his shield, large, massy, round,  
 Of broad circumference ; it struck my soul  
 With terror. On its orb no vulgar artist  
 Expressed this image, a Typhæus huge,  
 Disgorging from his foul enfouled jaws,  
 In fierce effusion, wreaths of dusky smoke,  
 Signal of kindling flames : its bending verge  
 With folds of twisted serpents bordered round.  
 With shouts the giant-chief provokes the war ;  
 And in the ravings of outrageous valour  
 Glares terror from his eyes. Behoves thee then  
 Strong opposition to his fiery rage,  
 Which at the gates e'en now spreads wild dismay.

ETE. First, Onca Pallas, holding near the gates  
 Her hallowed state, abhors his furious rage ;  
 And in her guardian care shall crush the pride  
 Of this fell dragon. Then the son of Ænops,  
 Hyperbius, of approved and steady valour,  
 Shall man to man oppose him ; one that dares  
 Assay his fate in the rough shock of battle ;  
 In form, in spirit, and in martial arms  
 Consummate ; such high grace Hermes conferred.  
 In hostile arms thus man shall combat man,  
 And to the battle on their sculptured shields  
 Bring adverse gods ; the fierce Typhæus he,  
 Breathing forth flakes of fire ; Hyperbius bears  
 The majesty of Jove securely throned,  
 Grasping his flaming bolt : and who e'er saw  
 The Thund'rer vanquished ? In the fellowship  
 Of friendly gods, the conquerors are with us,  
 They with the conquered ; and with like event  
 These warriors shall engage. As Jove in fight

Subdued the fell Typhæus, so his form  
Emblazoned on the shield shall guard Hyperbius.

CHOR. If aught of truth my soul inspires,  
This chief, that tow'ring o'er th' affrighted field  
Bears on his sculptured shield  
Th' enormous monster, buried deep  
Beneath a mountainous heap,  
Rolling in vain his turbid fires,  
Monster accursed, abhorred,  
By gods above, by men below ;  
This chief his head shall bow  
Low at the gate beneath the victor's sword.

SOL. Prophetic be thy hopes. At the north gate,  
Yet hear me, king, the fifth bold warrior takes  
His station near the tomb where honoured lies  
Jove-born Amphion : by his spear he swears,  
Which, as he grasps, he dares to venerate  
More than a god, and dearer to his eyes  
Than the sweet light of heaven : by this he swears  
To level with the ground the walls of Thebes,  
Though Jove himself oppose him. Thus exclaims  
This beauteous branch sprung from a mountain nymph,  
Blooming in manly youth ; the tender down  
Of unripe age scarce sprouting on his cheek ;  
But ruthless are his thoughts, cruel his eye,  
And proudly vaunting at the gate he takes  
His terrible stand. Upon his clashing shield,  
Whose orb sustains the storm of war, he bears  
The foul disgrace of Thebes, a rav'nous sphinx,  
Fixed to the plates ; the burnished monster round  
Pours a portentous gleam : beneath her lies  
A Theban, mangled by her cruel fangs.  
'Gainst this let each brave arm direct the spear.  
No hireling he, to prostitute for gold



The war, or shame the length of way he trod,  
 E'en from Arcadia: such this stranger comes  
 Parthenopœus, and repays to Argos  
 Its hospitable honours, 'gainst these towers  
 Breathing proud menaces. The gods avert them!

ETE. That ruin, which their fierce aspiring thoughts  
 With impious vaunts intend, may the just gods  
 Turn on themselves, total defeat, and shame;  
 So let them perish! To this proud Arcadian  
 No boaster we oppose; but one whose hand  
 Knows its rough work, Actor, the valiant brother  
 Of him last named. Never will he permit  
 The tongue, without th' assay of warlike deeds,  
 To rush within the gates, and execute  
 Its ruinous threats; nor him, whose hostile shield  
 Bears sculptured that abhorred and rav'ning beast:  
 And many a thund'ring stroke with stern rebuke  
 Shall check her proud advances to the walls.  
 Soon shall the fav'ring gods confirm these hopes.

CHOR. These words appal my throbbing breast:  
 And the light tangles of my braided hair  
 Rise upright with my fear,  
 As from the impious foes around  
 These dreadful voices sound,  
 Furious with thund'ring threats exprest.  
 Ye powers, that rule on high,  
 Scatter their dreaded forces wide,  
 Or let their crested pride  
 Low in the dust beneath our rampires lie!

SOL. The sixth brave chief, that with the golden curb  
 Of prudence knows to check his gen'rous valour,  
 The fate-foretelling seer, Amphiaraus,  
 At th' Omolæan gate his destined post  
 Assumes in arms, and on the fiery Tydeus

Throws many a keen reproach, reviles him as  
 A homicide, the troubler of the State,  
 The mighty author of all ill to Argos,  
 With murder and the furies at his heels  
 Urging Adrastus to these hateful deeds.  
 Thy brother Polynices, with him leagued  
 In these spiteful deeds, he blames aloud,  
 Descants upon his name, and thus rebukes him,  
 How grateful to the gods must this deed be,  
 Glorious to hear, and in the roll of fame  
 Shining to distant ages, thus to lead  
 These foreign arms to waste thy bleeding country,  
 To raze those princely mansions, where thy fathers,  
 Heroes and demigods, once held their seats !  
 But say thy cause be just, will justice dry  
 Thy mother's tears? And when the furious spear,  
 Hurl'd by thy hand, shall pierce thy country's bosom,  
 Will she with friendly arms again receive thee?  
 Prescient of fate I shall enrich this soil,  
 Sunk in the hostile plain. But let us fight.  
 One thing at least is mine ; I will not find  
 A vulgar or dishonourable death.  
 So spoke the prophet ; and with awful port  
 Advanced his massy shield, the shining orb  
 Bearing no impress : for his gen'rous soul  
 Wishes to be, not to appear, the best ;  
 And from the culture of his modest worth  
 Bears the rich fruit of great and glorious deeds.  
 Him let the virtuous and the wise oppose ;  
 For dreadful is the foe that fears the gods.

ETE. I mourn the destiny that blends the just  
 With these unhallowed wretches. Nothing worse  
 In whate'er cause, than impious fellowship ;  
 Nothing of good is reaped ; for when the field

Is sown with wrong, the ripened fruit is death.  
 If with a desperate band, whose hearts are hot  
 With villany, the pious hoists his sails,  
 The vengeance of the gods bursts on the barque  
 And sinks him with the heaven-detested crew.  
 If midst a race, inhospitably bent  
 On savage deeds, regardless of the gods,  
 The just man fix his seat, th' impending wrath  
 Spares not, but strikes him with vindictive fury,  
 Crushed in the general ruin. So this seer,  
 Of tempered wisdom, of unsullied honour,  
 Just, good, and pious, and a mighty prophet,  
 In despite to his better judgment joined  
 With men of impious daring, bent to tread  
 The long, irremeable way, with them  
 Shall, if high Jove assist us, be dragged down  
 To joint perdition. Ne'er shall he advance  
 Against our gates, withheld not by base fear,  
 Or cowardice of soul; but that he knows  
 His fate, if Phœbus aught of truth foretells,  
 To fall in fight: he loves then to be silent,  
 Since what the time demands he cannot speak,  
 Yet him against the strength of Lasthenes,  
 Who from the stranger's inroad guards our gates,  
 Shall I oppose: in manhood's vig'rous prime  
 He bears the providence of age; his eye  
 Quick as the lightning's glance; before his shield  
 Flames his protended spear, and longs t' obey  
 His hand. But victory is the gift of Heaven.

CHOR. That gift, ye great immortal powers,  
 On the brave guardians of our State bestow:  
 On each victorious brow  
 The radiant honour bind! Oh, hear  
 A virgin's pious prayer;

Chase the proud strangers from our towers ;  
 Or headlong let them fall,  
 Thy red right hand, almighty Sire,  
 Rolling its vengeful fire,  
 In flaming ruin stretched beneath our wall !

SOL. The seventh bold chief—forgive me that I name  
 Thy brother, and relate the horrible vows,  
 The imprecations, which his rage pours forth  
 Against the city ; on fire to mount the walls,  
 And from their turrets to this land proclaim,  
 Rending its echoes with the song of war,  
 Captivity : to meet thee sword to sword,  
 Kill thee, then die upon thee : if thou livest,  
 T' avenge on thee his exile and disgrace  
 With the like treatment. Thund'ring vengeance thus  
 The rage of Polynices calls the gods,  
 Presiding o'er his country, to look down,  
 And aid his vows. His well-orbed shield he holds,  
 New-wrought, and with a double impress charged :  
 A warrior, blazing all in golden arms,  
 A female form of modern aspect leads,  
 Expressing justice, as th' inscription speaks,  
 YET ONCE MORE TO HIS COUNTRY, AND ONCE MORE  
 TO HIS PATERNAL THRONE I WILL RESTORE HIM.  
 Such their devices. But th' important task,  
 Whom to oppose against his force, is thine.  
 Let not my words offend : I but relate,  
 Do thou command ; for thou art sov'reign here.

ETE. How dreadful is the hatred of the gods !  
 Unhappy sons of Œdipus, your fate  
 Claims many a tear. Ah me ! my father's curse  
 Now stamps its vengeance deep. But to lament,  
 Or sigh, or shed the tear, becomes me not,  
 Lest more intolerable grief arise.  
 Be Polynices told, ill-omened name,

Soon shall we see how far his blazoned shield  
Avails ; how far inscriptions wrought in gold,  
With all their futile vauntings, will restore him.  
If justice, virgin daughter of high Jove,  
Had ever formed his mind, or ruled his actions,  
This might have been : but neither when his eyes  
First saw the light of life ; nor in the growth  
Of infancy ; nor in th' advancing years  
Of youth ; nor in the riper age that clothes  
With gradual down the manly cheek, did justice  
E'er deign t' instruct, or mark him for her own.  
Nor now, I ween, in this his fell intent  
To crush his country will her presence aid him :  
For justice were not justice, should she favour  
Th' injurious outrage of his daring spirit.  
In this confiding I will meet his arms  
In armed opposition : who more fit ?  
Chief shall engage with chief, with brother brother,  
And foe with foe. Haste, arm me for the fight,  
Bring forth my greaves, my hauberk, my strong spear.

CHOR. Dear to thy country, son of Œdipus,  
Be not thy rage like his, whom we abhor.  
Thebes has no dearth of valiant sons t' oppose  
These Argives ; and their blood may be atoned ;  
The death of brothers by each other slain,  
That stain no expiation can atone.

ETE. Could man endure defeat without dishonour,  
'Twere well : but to the dead nothing remains,  
Save glory : to the dastard, and the base  
Fame never pays that honourable meed.

CHOR. Ah ! whither dost thou rush ? Let not revenge,  
That wildly raving shakes the furious spear,  
Transport thee thus. Check this hot tide of passion.

ETE. No : since the god impels me, I will on,  
And let the race of Laius, let them all,

Abhorred by Phœbus, in this storm of fate  
Sink down to deep Cocytus' dreary flood.

CHOR. Cruel and murd'rous is the rage that fires thee  
To deeds of death, to unpermitted blood ;  
And sorrow is the bitter fruit it yields.

ETE. My father's curse, a stern relentless fury,  
Rolling her tearless eyes, looks on and tells me  
Glory pursues her prize, disdaining fate.

CHOR. Ah, rave not thus : fame will not call thee base  
Or cowardly, if well thy life be ordered.  
The gloomy fury enters not his house,  
Whose hands present th' accepted sacrifice.

ETE. The gods accept not us ; and on our fall  
Glory attends admiring. Why then sue  
For grace, with servile fear cringeing to death ?

CHOR. For that it is at hand : its terrible power  
Soothed by th' abatement of this fiery valour,  
May come perchance more gentle ; now it rages.

ETE. My father's imprecations rage, and haunt  
My sleep : too true the real visions rise,  
And wave the bloody sword that parts his kingdoms.

CHOR. Let us persuade thee, though thou scorn'st our sex.

ETE. What would thy wish have done ? Speak it in brief.

CHOR. Ah ! go not this way : go not to this gate.

ETE. My soul's on fire ; nor shall thy words retard me.

CHOR. Conquest that spurns at right offends the gods.

ETE. Ill suit these tame words the armed warrior's ear.

CHOR. And canst thou wish to spill thy brother's blood ?

ETE. By the just gods he shall not 'scape my vengeance.

CHOR. She comes, the fierce tremendous power,

And harrows up my soul with dread ;

No gentle goddess, prompt to shower

Her blessings on some favoured head.

I know her now, the prophetess of ill,

And vengeance ratifies each word,  
The votive fury, fiend abhorred  
The father's curses to fulfil,  
Dreadful she comes, and with her brings  
The brood of fate, that laps the blood of kings.

The rude barbarian, from the mines  
Of Scythia, o'er the lots presides ;  
Ruthless to each his share assigns,  
And the contested realm divides :  
To each allots no wider a domain  
Than, on the cold earth as they lie,  
Their breathless bodies occupy,  
Regardless of an ampler reign.

Such narrow compass does the sword,  
A cruel umpire, their high claims afford.

Conflicting thus in furious mood,  
Should each by other's hand be slain ;  
Should the black fountain of their blood  
Spout forth, and drench the thirsty plain ;  
Who shall the solemn expiation pay ;  
Who with pure lavers cleanse the dead ;  
Miseries to miseries thus succeed,  
And vengeance marks this house her prey,  
Swift to chastise the first ill deed ;  
And the son's sons in her deep fury bleed.

The first ill deed from Laius sprung :  
Thrice from his shrine these words of fate  
Awful the Pythian Phœbus sung,  
" Die childless, wouldst thou save the State."  
Urged by his friends, as round the free wine flows,  
To love's forbidden rites he flies.  
By the son's hand the father dies,  
He in the chaste ground, whence he arose,

Was bold t' implant the deadly root ;  
And madness reared each baleful-spreading shoot.

Wide o'er misfortune's surging tide  
Billows succeeding billows spread ;  
Should one, its fury spent, subside,  
Another lifts its boist'rous head,  
And foams around the city's shattered prow.  
But should the rough tempestuous wave  
Force through our walls too slight to save  
And lay the thin partition low,  
Will not the flood's resistless sway  
Sweep kings and people, town and realms away ?

The dreadful curse pronounced of old  
To vengeance rouses ruthless hate ;  
And slaughter, ranging uncontrolled,  
Pursues the hideous work of fate.  
Wrecked in the storm the great, the brave, the wise  
Are sunk beneath the roaring tide.  
Such was the chief, this city's pride,  
Dear to each god in yon bright skies,  
Whose prudence took our dread away,  
The rav'ning monster gorged with human prey.

Where now the chief ? His glories where ?  
Fall'n, fall'n. From the polluted bed  
Indignant madness, wild despair,  
And agonizing grief succeed.  
The light of heaven, himself, his sons abhorred,  
Darkling he feeds his gloomy rage,  
Bids them, with many a curse, engage,  
And part their empire with the sword.  
That curse now holds its unmoved state,  
The furious fiend charged with the work of fate.



SOLDIER, CHORUS.

SOLDIER. Have comfort, virgins, your fond parents' joy ;  
The city hath escaped the servile yoke,  
And the proud vaunts of these impetuous men  
Are fall'n ; the storm is ceased, and the rough waves  
That threatened to o'erwhelm us, are subsided.  
Our towers stand firm, each well-appointed chief  
Guarded his charge with manly fortitude.  
All at six gates is well ; but at the seventh  
The god, to whom that mystic number's sacred,  
Royal Apollo, took his awful stand,  
Repaying on the race of Œdipus  
The ill-advised transgression of old Laius.

CHOR. What new affliction hath befallen the city ?

SOL. The city is preserved : the brother kings  
Are fallen, each slaughtered by the other's hand.

CHOR. Who ? What ? Thy words distract my sense with  
fear.

SOL. Be calm, and hear. The sons of Œdipus.

CHOR. Ah me ! I am the prophetess of ill.

SOL. It is indeed too certain : both are dead.

CHOR. Came they to this ? 'Tis horrible ; yet tell me.

SOL. Brother by brother's hands dreadfully slain.

CHOR. And has one common fate involved them both ?

SOL. It has indeed destroyed th' unhappy race.

Here then is cause for lamentation, cause  
For joy : joy, that the city stands secure ;  
But lamentation, that the chiefs are fall'n.  
To both the rigid steel, forged in the mines  
Of Scythia, shares their whole inheritance ;  
And each receives but that small tract of earth,  
Which serves him for a tomb ; their father's curse,  
Fatally cruel, sweeps them both away.

The city is preserved ; but the dust drinks  
The blood of the brothers, each by th' other slain.

## CHORUS

*Monostrophe.*

O Jove supreme,  
And all ye gods that guard this State,  
Should I the joyful Pæan raise,  
And celebrate your praise ?  
Your guardian care, propitious powers,  
Preserved our walls, preserved our towers !  
Or bid the solemn, doleful strain  
Lament the chiefs, the brothers slain ;  
A mournful theme ;  
Through mad ambition's impious pride  
Childless, unblessed, in youth's warm tide  
Fallen, fallen by too severe a fate ?

*Strophe.*

Thou gloomy curse, too prompt to ill,  
A father's vengeance to fulfil,  
I feel, I feel thee in my shiv'ring breast !  
Soon as I heard th' unhappy slain  
Lay welt'ring on th' ensanguined plain,  
With inspiration's raging power possest,  
I formed the funeral strains to flow  
With all the melody of woe.

*Antistrophe.*

Thou fell, ill-omened, cruel spear,  
Couldst thou the father's curses hear,  
And winged with fury drink the brothers' gore ?  
Now, Laius, boast the frantic deed ;  
Thy disobedience has its meed ;  
The fatal oracle delays no more.

These are your works ; and round them stand  
 Horrors, and death's avenging band.

*Epode.*

Is this a tale of fear-created woe?

In very deed before our eyes—

[*The dead bodies of ETEOCLES and POLYNICES  
 are here brought on the stage.*]

A twofold scene of misery lies,  
 And from a double slaughter double horrors flow ;  
 Whilst grief on grief, and groan on groan  
 Rush in, and make this house their own.

Come then, ye virgins, form the mournful bands,  
 'To wail the mighty slain ;

And ever and anon, at each sad pause

The dying cadence draws

Together smite your high-raised hands,  
 The sullen sound attempered to the strain,

That with many a dismal note

Accompanies the sable boat,

Slow as its sails on Acheron's dull stream,

Wafting its joyless numbers o'er

To that unlovely, dreary shore,

Which Phœbus never views, nor the light's golden beam.

1st SEMICHOR. But see, to aid this mournful office come

Antigone and Ismene : they be sure

Will, from their lovely gentleness of soul,

Pour for their brothers' loss their sorrows wild.

Behoves us then, ere the sad tale shall reach

Their ear, with meet solemnity to raise

The thrilling strain, and chant the hymn of death.

2nd SEMICHOR. Unhappy in your brothers, most un-  
 happy

Of all that o'er their swelling bosoms bind

The decent vest, I weep, I breathe the sigh  
Warm from my heart, that feels for your afflictions.

ANTIGONE, ISMENE, CHORUS.

1st SEMICHORUS. Ah! what frantic rage possesseth  
Each unyielding, ruthless breast,  
Wisdom scorned, and friends defied  
By threat'ning ills unterrified,  
'Gainst their father's house to bear,  
Wretched they, the fatal spear!

2nd SEMICHOR. Wretched they a wretched death  
Found their house's fall beneath.

1st SEMICHOR. Each the ruined palace o'er  
Strove t' extend his envied power:  
Each unrivalled and alone  
Proudly strove to seize the throne.  
But the sword their contest ends,  
Not the lovely strife of friends.  
Hate, that never knows remorse,  
Fury of the father's curse,  
Through their sides with horrid sway  
Urged the sharp steel's purple way.

2nd SEMICHOR. Charged with death thou cruel curse,  
Each hath felt thy fatal force.

1st SEMICHOR. Brother pierced by brother dies,  
Low their house in ruin lies.

2nd SEMICHOR. From the father's furious breath  
Discord rose, and rage, and death.

1st SEMICHOR. Grief with wild distracted air,  
Through the city leads despair;  
The towers on high, the vales below,  
Sigh the sullen notes of woe.  
To other lords the large domains,  
And the envied power remains;

Of the territories wide,  
For which they fought, for which they died,  
Each receives an equal share,  
Fiercely parted by the spear :  
Cruel arbiter of fate,  
Friends thy rude decisions hate.

2<sup>nd</sup> SEMICHOR. Pierced with steel each finds his end :  
Pierced with steel they haste t' attend  
Their fathers, by like bloody death,  
In the yawning grave beneath.

1<sup>st</sup> SEMICHOR. Grief that rends the tortured breast,  
Deep with real woes possest,  
Tears fast streaming from her eyes  
From the haunts of pleasure flies,  
Anguish, misery all her own,  
Sadly pours the hollow groan ;  
Whilst the ruined palace round  
Echo answers to the sound ;  
And, each frightful pause between,  
From her airy shell unseen,  
Listens to the funeral strain,  
Wailing the unhappy slain ;  
Wailing all the dreadful woes  
That from madding discord rose ;  
Many a friend among the dead,  
Whilst the hostile legions bleed.

2<sup>nd</sup> SEMICHOR. Far beyond each sorrowing dame,  
Each that bears a mother's name,  
Each that groans upon the earth,  
Hapless she that gave them birth.  
She, to share her bed and throne,  
As a husband took her son :  
These she bore, and this their fate,  
Brother slain by brother's hate.

ISM. Brothers they, by birth allied,  
 Spread the mutual carnage wide :  
 Unfriendly each to other's life,  
 In the madding rage of strife.  
 But their hatred is no more,  
 On the earth, all stained with gore,  
 Their stream of life unites, and shows  
 From one common source it rose.

CHOR. Umpire of the strife of kings,  
 Forth the barb'rous stranger springs :  
 Ruthless issuing from the flame  
 O'er the seas the keen steel came.  
 Ruthless came the realm to share,  
 Big with mischief, wasting war,  
 And accursed, without remorse,  
 Executes a father's curse.

ANT. They have the wretched share they chose,  
 Share of heaven-appointed woes :  
 And the rich, contested prize  
 Deep beneath earth's bosom lies.

ISM. It falls, the royal house, it falls ;  
 Ruin lords it o'er its walls ;  
 And the Furies howl around,  
 Notes of shrill, soul-piercing sound.  
 Slaughter, reeking yet with gore,  
 Raises high each gate before,  
 Where they fought, and where they bled,  
 Trophies of the mighty dead ;  
 And, the rival chiefs subdued,  
 Ceases from her work of blood.

ANT. Wounded thou gav'st the fatal wound.

ISM. Dying, thy hand its vengeance found.

ANT. By the spear 'twas thine to kill.

ISM. And the spear's thy blood to spill.

ANT. Fierce thy thought, and fell thy deed.

ISM. Fierce recoiled it on thy head.

ANT. Flow my tears.

ISM. My sorrows flow.

ANT. He that slew shall lie as low.

Madness mingles with my moans.

ISM. Heaves my heart, and bursts with groans.

ANT. Thou shalt claim the ceaseless tear.

ISM. To my soul wast thou most dear.

ANT. Thee thy friend stretched on the plain.

ISM. And by thee thy friend is slain.

ANT. Twice to see.

ISM. And twice to tell.

ANT. Near us do these sorrows dwell.

ISM. Near us dwell these sorrows, near

As to sisters brothers are.

ANT. Fate, in all thy terrors clad,

Ædipus, thy awful shade,

Erinnys, frowning black as night,

Dreadful, dreadful is your might!

ISM. Fierce from flight achieved he deeds,  
At which my heart with anguish bleeds.

ANT. Nor is he returned that slew.

ISM. Safe himself, on death he flew.

ANT. Death upon himself he brought.

ISM. And to him destruction wrought.

ANT. Sprung from an unhappy line.

ISM. In one unhappy fate they join.

ANT. Mournful, threefold misery.

ISM. Sad to tell.

ANT. And sad to see.

Fate in all thy terrors clad,

Ædipus, thy awful shade,

Erinnys, frowning black as night,





He bled. Thus far of him am I bid say.  
Of Polynices, that his corpse shall lie  
Cast out unburied, to the dogs a prey ;  
Because his spear, had not the gods opposed,  
Threatened destruction to the lands of Thebes.  
In death the vengeance of his country's gods  
Pursues him, for he scorned them, and presumed  
To lead a foreign host, and storm the town.  
Be this then his reward, to lie exposed  
To rav'nous birds, unhonoured, of the rites  
'That grace the dead, libations at the tomb,  
The solemn strain, that 'midst the exequies  
Breathes from the friendly voice of woe, deprived.  
These are the mandates of the Theban rulers.

ANT. And to these Theban rulers I declare,  
If none besides dare bury him, myself  
Will do that office, heedless of the danger,  
And think no shame to disobey the State,  
Paying the last sad duties to a brother.  
Nature has tender ties, and strongly joins  
The offspring of the same unhappy mother,  
And the same wretched father. In this task  
Shrink not, my soul, to share the ills he suffered,  
Involuntary ills ; and whilst life warms  
This breast, be bold to show a sister's love  
To a dead brother. Shall the famished wolves  
Fatten on him? Away with such a thought.  
I though a woman, will prepare his tomb,  
Dig up the earth, and bear it in this bosom,  
In these fine folds to cover him. Go to.  
I will not be opposed. Fruitful invention  
Shall devise means to execute the task.

HER. I charge thee not t' offend the State in this.

ANT. I charge thee waste not words on me in vain.

HER. Rage soon inflames a people freed from danger.

ANT. In flame them thou, he shall not lie unburied.

HER. Wilt thou thus grace the object of their hate?

ANT. Long have they strove to load him with dishonour.

HER. Not till he shook this land with hostile arms.

ANT. Great were his wrongs, and greatly he revenged them.

HER. Injured by one, his vengeance burst on all.

ANT. Discord, the meanest of the gods, will do  
What she resolves ; spare then thy tedious speech,  
And be assured that I will bury him.

HER. Self-willed, and unadvised ! I must declare this.

ANTIGONE, ISMENE, CHORUS.

1st SEMICHORUS. With what a ruthless and destructive  
rage

The Furies hurl their vengeful shafts around,  
And desolate the house of *Cædipus* !  
What then remains for me ? and how resolve ?  
Can I forbear to mourn thee, to attend thee  
To the sad tomb ? Yet duty to the State,  
And reverence to its mandates, awes my soul.  
Thou shalt have many to lament thy fall :  
Whilst he, unwept, unpitied, unattended,  
Save by a sister's solitary sorrows,  
Sinks to the shades. Approve you this resolve ?

2nd SEMICHOR. To those that wail the fate of *Poly-  
nices*,

Let the State act its pleasure. We will go  
Attend his funeral rites, and aid his sister  
To place him in the earth. Such sorrows move  
The common feelings of humanity ;  
And, where the deed is just, the State approves it.

1st SEMICHOR. And we with him, as justice and the  
State

Concur to call us. Next th' immortal gods,  
And Jove's high power, this valiant youth came forth  
The guardian of his country, and repelled  
Th' assault of foreign foes, whose raging force  
Rushed like a torrent threat'ning to o'erwhelm us.



## AGAMEMNON.



IN this tragedy the reader will find the strongest traces of the genius of Æschylus, and the most distinguishing proofs of his skill. Great in his conceptions, bold and daring in his metaphors, strong in his passions, he here touches the heart with uncommon emotions. The odes are particularly sublime, and the oracular spirit that breathes through them, adds a wonderful elevation and dignity to them. Short as the part of Agamemnon is, the poet has the address to throw such an amiable dignity around him that we soon become interested in his favour, and are predisposed to lament his fate. The character of Clytemnestra is finely marked; a high-spirited, artful, close, determined, dangerous woman. But the poet has nowhere exerted such efforts of his genius, as in the scene where Cassandra appears: as a prophetess, she gives every mark of the divine inspiration, from the dark and distant hint, through all the noble imagery of the prophetic enthusiasm; till, as the catastrophe advances, she more and more plainly declares it: as a suffering princess, her grief is plaintive, lively, and piercing; yet she goes to meet her death, which she clearly foretells, with a firmness worthy the daughter of Priam and the sister of Hector: nothing can be more animated or more interesting than this scene. The conduct

of the poet through this play is exquisitely judicious; every scene gives us some obscure hint, or ominous presage, enough to keep our attention always raised, and to prepare us for the event; even the studied caution of Clytemnestra is finely managed to produce that effect; whilst the secrecy with which she conducts her design, keeps us in suspense, and prevents a discovery till we hear the dying groans of her murdered husband.

It is to be lamented that a late amiable poet, in his tragedy on this subject, which, too, he wished to have esteemed as classical, should have deviated so far from his great original, particularly in the character of Clytemnestra: but as he wanted strength of genius to imitate the noble simplicity of Æschylus, his taste led him to take Seneca for his model, and he has succeeded accordingly.

The scene of this play is at Argos, before the palace of Agamemnon.

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PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

WATCHMAN.  
CLYTEMNESTRA.  
HERALD.  
AGAMEMNON.

CASSANDRA.  
ÆGISTHUS.  
CHORUS OF ARGIVE SENATORS.

---

THE WATCHMAN.

YE fav'ring gods, relieve me from this toil:  
Fixed, as a dog, on Agamemnon's roof  
I watch the live-long year, observing hence  
The host of stars, that in the spangled skies  
Take their bright stations, and to mortals bring  
Winter and summer; radiant rulers, when  
They set, or rising, glitter through the night.

Here now I watch, if haply I may see  
The blazing torch, whose flame bring news from Troy,  
The signal of its ruin : these high hopes  
My royal mistress, thinking on her lord  
Feeds in her heart. Meanwhile the dews of night  
Fall on my couch, unvisited by dreams ;  
For fear, lest sleep should close my eyes, repels  
The soft intruder. When my spirits prompt me  
To raise the song, or hum the sullen notes  
Preventing slumber, then I sigh, and wail  
The state of this unhappy house, no more  
Well-ordered as of old. But may my toils  
Be happily relieved ! Blaze, thou bright flame,  
Herald of joy, blaze through the gloomy shades—  
And it does blaze. Hail, thou auspicious flame,  
That streaming through the night denoucest joy,  
Welcomed with many a festal dance in Argos !  
In the queen's ear I'll holloa this, and rouse her  
From her soft couch with speed, that she may teach  
The royal dome to echo with the strains  
Of choral warblings greeting this blest fire,  
Bright sign that Troy is taken. Nor shall I  
Forbear the prelude to the dance before her :  
For by this watch, so prosperously concluded,  
I to my masters shall assure good fortune.  
Shall I then see my king returned, once more  
To grace this house ? and shall this hand once more  
Hang on his friendly hand ? I could unfold  
A tale. But, hush ; my tongue is chained : these walls,  
Could they but speak, would make discoveries.  
There are who know this ; and to them this hint  
Were plain : to those, that know it not, mysterious.

CHOR. The tenth slow year rolls on, since great in arms  
The noble sons of Atreus, each exalted

To majesty and empire, royal brothers,  
Led hence a thousand ships, the Argive fleet,  
Big with the fate of Priam and of Troy ;  
A warlike preparation ; their bold breasts  
Breathing heroic ardour to high deeds ;  
Like vultures, which, their unplumed offspring lost,  
Whirl many a rapid flight, for that their toil  
To guard their young was vain : till some high power,  
For they are dear to Phœbus, dear to Pan,  
And Jove, with pity hears their shrill-voiced grief,  
And sends, though late, the fury to avenge  
Their plundered nests on the unpitying spoilers.  
So now the power of hospitable Jove  
Arms against Paris, for th' oft-wedded dame,  
The sons of Atreus, bent to plunge the hosts  
Of Greece and Troy in all the toils, that sink  
The body down, the firm knee bowed in dust,  
And the strong spear, ere conquest crowns their helms,  
Shivered in battle. These are what they are,  
And fate directs th' event : nor the bent knee,  
Libation pure, or supplicating tear,  
Can soothe the stern rage of those merciless powers  
In whose cold shrine no hallowed flame ascends.  
But we, our age-enfeebled limbs unfit  
For martial toils, inglorious here remain,  
The staff supporting our weak steps, like children :  
For as the infant years have not attained  
The military vigour, withered age  
Crawls through the streets like helpless infancy,  
And passes as a day-dream. But what tidings,  
What circumstances of fair event hath reached  
Thy royal ears, daughter of Tyndarus,  
Inducing thee to send the victims round ?  
The shrines of all the gods, whose guardian cares



Watch o'er this State, be they enthroned in heaven,  
 Or rule beneath the earth, blaze with thy presents ;  
 And from th' imperial dome a lengthened line  
 Of torches shoot their lustre to the skies.  
 O tell me what is fit for me to know,  
 And prudence suffers to be told : speak peace  
 To this anxiety, which one while swells  
 Presaging ill, and one while from the victims  
 Catches a gleam of hope, whose cheering ray  
 Breaks through the gloom that darkens o'er my soul.

*Strophe.*

It swells upon my soul : I feel the power  
     To hail th' auspicious hour,  
 When, their brave hosts marching in firm array,  
     The heroes led the way.  
     The fire of youth glows in each vein,  
 And heaven-born confidence inspires the strain.  
     Pleased the omen to record,  
     That to Troy's ill-fated strand  
     Led each monarch, mighty lord,  
     Led the bold confederate band,  
 The strong spear quiv'ring in their vengeful hand.  
     Full in each royal chieftain's view,  
 A royal eagle whirls his flight ;  
     In plumage one of dusky hue,  
     And one his dark wings edged with white ;  
 Swift to th' imperial mansion take their way,  
     And in their armed talons bear,  
     Seized in its flight, a pregnant hare,  
 And in those splendid seats enjoy their prey.  
  
 Sound high the strain, the swelling notes prolong,  
 Till conquest listens to the raptured song.

*Antistrophe.*

The venerable seer, whose skill divine  
 Knows what the Fates design,  
 On each bold chief, that for the battle burns,  
 His glowing eyeball turns ;  
 And thus in high prophetic strains  
 The rav'ning eagles and their prey explains :  
 " Priam's haughty town shall fall,  
 Slow they roll, the destined hours,  
 Fate and fury shake her wall,  
 Vengeance wide the ruin pours,  
 And conquest seizes all her treasured stores.  
 Ah, may no storm from th' angry sky  
 Burst dreadful o'er this martial train,  
 Nor check their ardour, flaming high  
 To pour the war o'er Troy's proud plain !  
 Wrath kindles in the chaste Diana's breast :  
 Gorged with the pregnant mother's blood,  
 And, ere the birth, her hapless brood,  
 Hell-hounds of Jove, she hates your horrid feast.  
 Sound high the strain, the swelling notes prolong,  
 Till conquest listens to the raptured song.

*Epode.*

" The virgin goddess of the chase,  
 Fair from the spangled dew-drops that adorn  
 The breathing flowrets of the morn,  
 Protectress of the infant race  
 Of all that haunt the tangled grove,  
 Or o'er the rugged mountains rove,  
 She, beauteous queen, commands me to declare  
 What by the royal birds is shown,  
 Signal of conquest, omen fair,

But darkened by her awful frown.  
 God of the distant-wounding bow,  
 Thee, Pæan, thee I call ; hear us, and aid ;  
 Ah ! may not the offended maid  
 Give the sullen gales to blow,  
 Adverse to this eager train,  
 And bar th' unnavigable main ;  
 Nor other sacrifice demand,  
 At whose barbaric rites no feast is spread ;  
 But discord rears her horrid head,  
 And calls around her murd'rous band :  
 Leagued with hate, and fraud, and fear,  
 Nor king, nor husband, they revere ;  
 Indignant o'er a daughter weep,  
 And burn to stamp their vengeance deep ? ”  
 Prophetic thus the reverend Chalcas spoke,  
 Marking th' imperial eagles' whirling wings ;  
 From his rapt lips the joyful presage broke,  
 Success and glory to th' embattled kings.

Sound high the strain, th' according notes prolong,  
 Till conquest listens to the raptured song.

*Strophe 1.*

O thou, that sitt'st supreme above,  
 Whatever name thou deign'st to hear,  
 Unblamed may I pronounce thee Jove !  
 Immersed in deep and holy thought,  
 If rightly I conjecture aught,  
 Thy power I must revere :  
 Else vainly tossed the anxious mind  
 Nor truth, nor calm repose, can find.  
 Feeble and helpless to the light  
 The proudest of man's race arose,

Though now, exulting in his might,  
 Dauntless he rushes on his foes ;  
 Great as he is, in dust he lies ;  
 He meets a greater, and he dies.

*Antistrophe 1.*

He that, when conquest brightens round,  
 Swells the triumphal strain to Jove,  
 Shall ever with success be crowned.  
 Yet often, when to wisdom's seat  
 Jove deigns to guide man's erring feet,  
 His virtues to improve ;  
 He to affliction gives command  
 To form him with her chastening hand :  
 The memory of her rigid lore,  
 On the sad heart imprinted deep,  
 Attends him through day's active hour,  
 Nor in the night forsakes his sleep.  
 Instructed thus thy grace we own,  
 O thou, that sittest on Heaven's high throne !

*Strophe 2.*

When now in Aulis' rolling bay  
 His course the refluent floods refused,  
 And sickening with inaction lay  
 In dead repose th' exhausted train,  
 Did the firm chief of chance complain ?  
 No prophet he accused ;  
 His eyes towards Chalcis bent he stood,  
 And silent marked the surging flood.  
 Sullen the winds from Strymon sweep,  
 Mischance and famine in the blast,  
 Ceaseless torment the angry deep,  
 The cordage rend, the vessels waste,

With tedious and severe delay  
Wear the fresh flower of Greece away.

*Antistrophe 2.*

When, in Diana's name, the seer  
Pronounced the dreadful remedy  
More than the stormy sea severe,  
Each chieftain stood in grief profound,  
And smote his sceptre on the ground :  
Then with a rising sigh  
The monarch, whilst the big tears roll,  
Expressed the anguish of his soul :  
" Dreadful the sentence : not t' obey,  
Vengeance and ruin close us round :  
Shall then the sire his daughter slay,  
In youth's fresh bloom with beauty crowned ?  
Shall on these hands her warm blood flow ?  
Cruel alternative of woe !

*Strophe 3.*

" This royal fleet, this martial host,  
The cause of Greece, shall I betray,  
The monarch in the father lost ?  
To calm these winds, to smooth this flood,  
Diana's wrath a virgin's blood  
Demands : 'tis ours t' obey."  
Bound in necessity's iron chain  
Reluctant nature strives in vain :  
Impure, unholy thoughts succeed,  
And darkening o'er his bosom roll ;  
Whilst madness prompts the ruthless deed,  
Tyrant of the misguided soul :  
Stern on the fleet he rolls his eyes,  
And dooms the hateful sacrifice.

*Antistrophe 3.*

Armed in a woman's cause, around  
     Fierce for the war the princes rose ;  
 No place affrighted pity found.  
 In vain the virgin's streaming tear,  
 Her cries in vain, her pleading prayer,  
     Her agonizing woes.  
 Could the fond father hear unmoved ?  
 The Fates decreed : the king approved :  
 Then to th' attendants gave command  
     Decent her flowing robes to bind ;  
 Prone on the altar with strong hand  
     To place her, like a spotless hind ;  
 And check her sweet voice, that no sound  
 Unhallowed might the rites confound.

*Epode.*

Rent on the earth her maiden veil she throws,  
     That emulates the rose ;  
 And on the sad attendants rolling  
 The trembling lustre of her dewy eyes,  
     Their grief-impassioned souls controlling,  
 That ennobled, modest grace,  
     Which the mimic pencil tries  
 In the imaged form to trace,  
     The breathing picture shows :  
 And as, amidst his festal pleasures,  
     Her father oft rejoiced to hear  
 Her voice in soft mellifluous measures  
     Warble the sprightly-fancied air ;  
 So now in act to speak the virgin stands :  
     But when, the third libation paid,  
     She heard her father's dread commands  
 Enjoining silence, she obeyed :

And for her country's good,  
 With patient, meek, submissive mind  
 To her hard fate resigned,  
 Poured out the rich stream of her blood.

What since hath past I know not, nor relate ;  
 But never did the prophet speak in vain,  
 Th' afflicted, anxious for his future fate,  
 Looks forward, and with hope relieves his pain.

But since th' inevitable ill will come,  
 Much knowledge to much misery is allied ;  
 Why strive we then t' anticipate the doom,  
 Which happiness and wisdom wish to hide ?

Yet let this careful, age-enfeebled band  
 Breathe from our inmost soul one ardent vow,  
 Now the sole guardians of this Apian land,  
 " May fair success with glory bind her brow ! "

CLYTEMNESTRA, CHORUS.

CHORUS. With reverence, Clytemnestra, I approach  
 Thy greatness ; honour due to her that fills  
 The royal seat, yet vacant of its lord.  
 If aught of glad import hath reached thy ear.  
 Or to fair hope the victim bleeds, I wish,  
 But with submission to thy will, to hear.

CLY. The joy-importing Morn springs, as they say,  
 From Night, her mother. Thou shalt hear a joy  
 Beyond thy hopes to hear : the town of Priam  
 Is fallen beneath the conquering arms of Greece.

CHOR. What saidst thou ? Passing credence fled thy  
 word.

CLY. In Troy Greece triumphs. Speak I clearly now ?

CHOR. Joy steals upon me, and calls forth the tear.

CLY. Thy glist'ning eye bespeaks an honest heart.

CHOR. Does aught of certain proof confirm these tidings?

CLY. It does. Why not? unless the gods deceive us.

CHOR. Perchance the visions of persuasive dreams.

CLY. Sport of the slumbering soul; they move not me.

CHOR. Hath then some winged rumour spread these transports?

CLY. As a raw girl's, thou holdest my judgment cheap.

CHOR. How long hath ruin crushed this haughty city?

CLY. This night, that gave this infant morning birth.

CHOR. What speed could be the herald of this news?

CLY. The fire, that from the height of Ida sent  
 Its streaming light, as from th' announcing flame  
 Torch blazed to torch. First Ida to the steep  
 Of Lemnos; Athos' sacred height received  
 The mighty splendour; from the surging back  
 Of the Hellespont the vigorous blaze held on  
 Its smiling way, and like the orient sun  
 Illumes with golden-gleaming rays the head  
 Of rocky Macetas; nor lingers there,  
 Nor winks unheedful, but its warning flames  
 Darts to the streams of Euripus, and gives  
 Its glittering signal to the guards that hold  
 Their high watch on Mesapius. These enkindle  
 The joy-denouncing fires, that spread the blaze  
 To where Erica hoar its shaggy brow  
 Waves rudely. Unimpaired the active flame  
 Bounds o'er the level of Asopus, like  
 The jocund moon, and on Cithæron's steep  
 Wakes a successive flame; the distant watch  
 Agnize its shine, and raise a brighter fire,  
 That o'er the lake Gorgopis streaming holds



Its rapid course, and on the mountainous heights  
 Of Ægiplanctus huge, swift-shooting spreads  
 The lengthened line of light. Thence onwards waves  
 Its fiery tresses, eager to ascend  
 The crags of Prone, frowning in their pride  
 O'er the Saronic gulf: it leaps, it mounts  
 The summit of Arachne, whose high head  
 Looks down on Argos: to this royal seat  
 'Thence darts the light that from th' Idæan fire  
 Derives its birth. Rightly in order thus  
 Each to the next consigns the torch, and fills  
 The bright succession, whilst the first in speed  
 Vies with the last: the promised signal this  
 Given by my lord t' announce the fall of Troy.

CHOR. Anon my grateful praise shall rise to Heaven:  
 Now, lady, would I willingly attend  
 Through each glad circumstance the wond'rous tale.

CLY. This day the conquering Greeks are lords of Troy.  
 Methinks I hear the various clamours rise  
 Discordant through the city. Pour thou oil  
 In the same vase and vinegar, in vain  
 Wouldst thou persuade th' unsocial streams to mix:  
 The captives' and the conqueror's voice distinct,  
 Marks of their different fortune, mayst thou hear:  
 Those rolling on the bodies of the slain,  
 Friends, husbands, brothers, fathers; the weak arms  
 Of children clasped around the bleeding limbs  
 Of hoary age, lament their fall, their necks  
 Bent to the yoke of slavery: eager these  
 From the fierce toils of war, who through the gloom  
 Of night ranged wide, fly on the spoils, as chance,  
 Not order, leads them; in the Trojan houses,  
 Won by their spears, they walk at large, relieved  
 From the cold dews dropt from th' unsheltered sky;

And at th' approach of eve, like those whose power  
 Commands security, the easy night  
 Shall sleep unguarded. If with hallowed rites  
 They venerate the gods that o'er the city,  
 With those that o'er the vanquished country rule,  
 And reverence their shrines, the conquering troops  
 Shall not be conquered. May no base desire,  
 No guilty wish urge them, enthralled to gain,  
 To break through sacred laws. Behoves them now,  
 With safety in their train, backward to plough  
 The reflux wave. Should they return exposed  
 To th' anger of the gods, vengeance would wake  
 To seize its prey, might they perchance escape  
 Life's incidental ills. From me thou hearest  
 A woman's sentiment ; and much I wish,  
 Their glories by no rude mischance depressed,  
 To cull from many blessings the most precious.

CHOR. With manly sentiment thy wisdom, lady,  
 Speaks well. Confiding in thy suasive signs,  
 Prepare we to address the gods ; our strains  
 Shall not without their meed of honour rise.

*Prosode.*

Supreme of kings, Jove ; and thou, friendly night,  
 That wide o'er Heaven's star-spangled plain  
 Holdest thy awful reign,  
 Thou, that with resistless might  
 O'er Troy's proud towers, and destined state,  
 Hast thrown the secret net of fate,  
 In whose enormous sweep the young, the old,  
 Without distinction rolled,  
 Are with unsparing fury dragged away  
 To slavery and woe a prey :  
 Thee, hospitable Jove, whose vengeful power

These terrors o'er the foe has spread,  
 Thy bow long bent at Paris' head,  
 Whose arrows know their time to fly,  
 Not hurtling aimless in the sky,  
 Our pious strains adore.

*Strophe 1.*

The hand of Jove will they not own ;  
 And, as his marks they trace,  
 Confess he willed, and it was done ?  
 Who now of earth-born race  
 Shall dare contend that his high power  
 Deigns not with eye severeto view  
 The wretch that tramples on his law ?  
 Hence with this impious lore :  
 Learn that the sons accursed shall rue  
 The madly daring father's pride,  
 That furious drew th' unrighteous sword,  
 High in his house the rich spoils stored,  
 And the avenging gods defied.  
 But be it mine to draw  
 From wisdom's fount, pure as it flows,  
 That calm of soul which virtue only knows.  
 For vain the shield that wealth shall spread,  
 To guard the proud oppressor's head,  
 Who dares the rites of justice to confound,  
 And spurn her altars to the ground.

*Antistrophe 1.*

But suasive is the voice of vice,  
 That spreads th' insidious snare ;  
 She, not concealed, through her disguise  
 Emits a livid glare.

Her votary, like adult'rate brass  
 Unfaithful to its use, unsound,  
 Proves the dark baseness of his soul ;  
 Fond as a boy to chase  
 The winged bird light-flitting round,  
 And bent on his pernicious play  
 Draws desolation on his state.  
 His vows no god regards, when fate  
 In vengeance sweeps the wretch away.  
 With base intent and foul,  
 Each hospitable law defied,  
 From Sparta's king thus Paris stole his bride.  
 To Greece she left the shield, the spear,  
 The naval armament of war ;  
 And, bold in ill, to Troy's devoted shore  
 Destruction for her dowry bore.

*Strophe 2.*

When through the gates her easy way  
 She took, his pensive breast  
 Each prophet smote in deep dismay,  
 And thus his grief exprest :  
 " What woes this royal mansion threat,  
 This mansion, and its mighty lord?  
 Where now the chaste connubial bed?  
 The traces of her feet,  
 By love to her blest consort led,  
 Where now? Ah! silent, see, she stands;  
 Each glowing tint, each radiant grace,  
 That charm th' enraptured eye, we trace ;  
 And still the blooming form commands,  
 Still honoured, still adored,  
 Though careless of her former loves  
 Far o'er the rolling sea the wanton roves :

The husband, with a bursting sigh,  
 Turns from the pictured fair his eye ;  
 Whilst love, by absence fed, without control  
 Tumultuous rushes on his soul.

*Antistrophe 2.*

“ Oft as short slumbers close his eyes,  
 His sad soul soothed to rest,  
 The dream-created visions rise,  
 With all her charms imprest :  
 But vain th’ ideal scene, that smiles  
 With rapturous love and warm delight ;  
 Vain his fond hopes : his eager arms  
 The fleeting form beguiles,  
 On sleep’s quick pinions passing light.”  
 Such griefs, and more severe than these,  
 Their sad gloom o’er the palace spread ;  
 Thence stretch their melancholy shade,  
 And darken o’er the realms of Greece.  
 Struck with no false alarms  
 Each house its home-felt sorrow knows,  
 Each bleeding heart is pierced with keenest woes ;  
 When for the hero, sent to share  
 The glories of the crimson war,  
 Nought, save his arms stained with their master’s gore,  
 And his cold ashes reach the shore.

*Strophe 3.*

Thus in the dire exchange of war  
 Does Mars the balance hold ;  
 Helms are the scale, the beam a spear,  
 And blood is weighed for gold.  
 Thus, for the warrior, to his friends  
 His sad remains, a poor return,

Saved from the sullen fire that rose  
 On Troy's cursed shore, he sends,  
 Placed decent in the mournful urn.  
 With many a tear their dead they weep,  
 Their names with many a praise resound ;  
 One for his skill in arms renowned ;  
 One, that amidst the slaughtered heap  
 Of fierce-conflicting foes  
 Glorious in beauty's cause he fell :  
 Yet 'gainst th' avenging chiefs their murmurs swell  
 In silence. Some in youth's fresh bloom  
 Beneath Troy's towers possess a tomb ;  
 Their bodies buried on the distant strand,  
 Seizing in death the hostile land.

*Antistrophe 3.*

How dreadful, when the people raise  
 Loud murmurs mixed with hate !  
 Yet this the tribute greatness pays  
 For its exalted state.  
 E'en now some dark and horrid deed  
 By my presaging soul is feared ;  
 For never with unheedful eyes,  
 When slaughtered thousands bleed,  
 Did the just powers of Heaven regard  
 The carnage of th' ensanguined plain.  
 The ruthless and oppressive power  
 May triumph for its little hour ;  
 Full soon with all their vengeful train  
 The sullen Furies rise,  
 Break his fell force, and whirl him down  
 Through life's dark paths, unpitied, and unknown.  
 And dangerous is the pride of fame,  
 Like the red lightning's dazzling flame.

Nor envied wealth, nor conquest let me gain,  
Nor drag the conqueror's hateful chain.

*Epode.*

But from these fires far streaming through the night  
Fame through the town her progress takes,  
And rapt'rous joy awakes ;  
If with truth's auspicious light  
They shine, who knows? Her sacred reign  
Nor fraud, nor falsehood, dares profane.  
But who, in wisdom's school so lightly taught,  
Suffers his ardent thought  
From these informing flames to catch the fire,  
Full soon perchance in grief t' expire?  
Yet when a woman holds the sovereign sway,  
Obsequious wisdom learns to bow,  
And hails the joy it does not know ;  
Though, as the glitt'ring visions roll  
Before her easy, credulous soul,  
Their glories fade away.

CLY. Whether these fires, that with successive signals  
Blaze through the night, be true, or like a dream  
Play with a sweet delusion on the soul,  
Soon shall we know. A herald from the shore  
I see ; branches of olive shade his brows.  
That cloud of dust, raised by his speed, assures me  
That neither speechless, nor enkindling flames  
Along the mountains, will he signify  
His message ; but his tongue shall greet our ears  
With words of joy : far from my soul the thought  
Of other, than confirm these fav'ring signals.

CHOR. May he, that to this State shall form a wish  
Of other aim, on his own head receive it.

## CLYTEMNESTRA, CHORUS, HERALD.

HERALD. Hail, thou paternal soil of Argive earth !  
In the fair light of the tenth year to thee  
Returned, from the sad wreck of many hopes  
This one I save ; saved from despair e'en this ;  
For never thought I in this honoured earth  
To share in death the portion of a tomb.  
Hail then, loved earth ; hail, thou bright sun ; and thou,  
Great guardian of my country, supreme Jove ;  
Thou, Pythian king, thy shafts no longer winged  
For our destruction ; on Scamander's banks  
Enough we mourned thy wrath ; propitious now  
Come, king Apollo, our defence. And all  
Ye gods, that o'er the works of war preside,  
I now invoke ; thee, Mercury, my avenger,  
Revered by heralds, that from thee derive  
Their high employ ; you heroes, to the war  
That sent us, friendly now receive our troops,  
The relics of the spear. Imperial walls,  
Mansion of kings, ye seats revered ; ye gods,  
That to the golden sun before these gates  
Present your honoured forms ; if e'er of old  
Those eyes with favour have beheld the king,  
Receive him now, after this length of time,  
With glory ; for he comes, and with him brings  
To you, and all, a light that cheers this gloom :  
Then greet him well ; such honour is his meed.  
The mighty king, that with the mace of Jove  
'Th' avenger, wherewith he subdues the earth,  
Hath levelled with the dust the towers of Troy ;  
Their altars are o'erturned, their sacred shrines,  
And all the race destroyed. This iron yoke  
Fixed on the neck of Troy, victorious comes



The great Atrides, of all mortal men  
 Worthy of highest honours. Paris now,  
 And the perfidious State, shall boast no more  
 His proud deeds unrevenged ; stript of his spoils,  
 The debt of justice for his thefts, his rapines,  
 Paid amply, o'er his father's house he spreads  
 With twofold loss the wide-involving ruin.

CLY. Joy to thee, herald of the Argive host.

HER. For joy like this death were a cheap exchange.

CLY. Strong thy affection to thy native soil.

HER. So strong, the tear of joy starts from my eye.

CLY. What, hath this sweet infection reached e'en you?

HER. Beyond the power of language have I felt it.

CLY. The fond desire of those, whose equal love——

HER. This of the army say'st thou, whose warm love  
 Streams to this land? Is this thy fond desire?

CLY. Such that I oft have breathed the secret sigh.

HER. Whence did the army cause this anxious sadness?

CLY. Silence I long have held a healing balm.

HER. The princes absent, hadst thou whom to fear?

CLY. To use thy words, death were a wished exchange.

HER. Well is the conflict ended. In the tide  
 Of so long time, if 'midst the easy flow  
 Of wished events some tyrannous blast assail us,  
 What marvel? Who, save the blest gods, can claim  
 Through life's whole course an unmixed happiness?  
 Should I relate our toils, our wretched plight  
 Wedged in our narrow ill-provided cabins,  
 Each irksome hour was loaded with fatigues.  
 Yet these were slight assays to those worse hardships  
 We suffered on the shore: our lodging near  
 The walls of the enemy, the dews of heaven  
 Fell on us from above, the damps beneath  
 From the moist marsh annoyed us, shrouded ill

In shaggy cov'rings. Or should one relate  
 'The winter's keen blasts, which from Ida's snows  
 Breathe frore, that, pierced through all their plumes, the  
 birds

Shiver and die; or th' extreme heat that scalds,  
 When in his midday caves the sea reclines,  
 And not a breeze disturbs his calm repose.  
 But why lament these sufferings? They are past;  
 Past to the dead indeed; they lie, no more  
 Anxious to rise. What then avails to count  
 Those whom the wasteful war hath swept away,  
 And with their loss afflict the living? Rather  
 Bid we farewell to misery: in our scale,  
 Who haply of the Grecian host remain,  
 'The good preponderates, and in counterpoise  
 Our loss is light; and, after all our toils  
 By sea and land, before yon golden sun  
 It is our glorious privilege to boast,  
 "At length from vanquished Troy our warlike troops  
 Have to the gods of Greece brought home these spoils,  
 And in their temples, to record our conquests,  
 Fixed these proud trophies." Those that hear this boast  
 It well becomes to gratulate the State,  
 And the brave chiefs; revering Jove's high power  
 That grace our conquering arms. Thou hast my message.

CHOR. Thy words convince me; all my doubts are  
 vanished:

But scrupulous inquiry grows with age.  
 On Clytemnestra and her house this charge,  
 Blessing e'en me with the rich joy, devolves.

CLY. Long since my voice raised high each note of  
 joy,

When through the night the streaming blaze first came,  
 And told us Troy was taken: not unblamed

That, as a woman lightly credulous,  
I let a mountain fire transport my soul  
With the fond hope that Ilion's haughty towers  
Were humbled in the dust. At this rebuke,  
Though somewhat shaken, yet I sacrificed ;  
And, as weak woman wont, one voice of joy  
Awoke another, till the city rang  
Through all its streets ; and at the hallowed shrines  
Each raised the pious strains of gratitude,  
And fanned the altar's incense-breathing flame.  
But it is needless to detain thee longer,  
Soon from the king's own lips shall I learn all.  
How best I may receive my honoured lord,  
And grace his wished return, now claims my speed.  
Can Heaven's fair beam show a fond wife a sight  
More grateful than her husband from his wars  
Returned with glory, when she opes the gate,  
And springs to welcome him? Tell my lord this.  
That he may hasten his desired return :  
And tell him he will find his faithful wife,  
Such as he left her, a domestic creature,  
To him all fondness, to his enemies  
Irreconcilable ; and tell him too  
That ten long years have not effaced the seal  
Of constancy ; that never knew I pleasure  
In the blamed converse of another man,  
More than the virgin metal in the mines  
Knows an adulterate and debasing mixture.

HER. This high boast, lady, sanctified by truth,  
Is not unseemly in thy princely rank.

HERALD, CHORUS.

CHORUS. This, for thy information, hath she spoken  
With dignity and truth. Now tell me, herald,

Of Sparta's king wish I to question thee,  
The pride of Greece : returns he safe with you ?

HER. Never can I esteem a falsehood honest,  
Though my friends long enjoy the sweet delusion.

CHOR. What then if thou relate an honest truth ?  
From this distinction the conjecture's easy.

HER. Him from the Grecian fleet our eyes have lost,  
The hero and his ship. This is the truth.

CHOR. Chanced this when in your sight he weighed from  
Or in a storm that rent him from the fleet ? [Troy ;

HER. Rightly is thy conjecture aimed, in brief  
Touching the long recital of our loss.

CHOR. How deemed the other mariners of this ;  
That the ship perished or rode out the storm ?

HER. Who, save yon sun, the regent of the earth,  
Can give a clear and certain information ?

CHOR. How saidst thou then a storm, not without loss,  
Winged with Heaven's fury, tossed the shattered fleet ?

HER. It is not meet, with inauspicious tongue  
Spreading ill tidings, to profane a day  
Sacred to festal joy : the gods require  
Their pure rites undisturbed. When with a brow  
Witness of woe, the messenger relates  
Unwelcome news, defeats, and slaughtered armies,  
The wound with general grief affects the State ;  
And with particular and private sorrow  
Full many a house, for many that have fall'n  
Victims to Mars, who to his bloody car  
Delights to yoke his terrors, sword and spear.  
A pæan to the Furies would become  
The bearer of such pond'rous heap of ills.  
My tidings are of conquest and success,  
Diffusing joy : with these glad sounds how mix  
Distress, and speak of storm and angry gods ?

The powers, before most hostile, now conspired,  
 Fire and the sea, in ruin reconciled :  
 And in a night of tempest wild from Thrace  
 In all their fury rushed the howling winds ;  
 'Tossed by the forceful blasts ship against ship  
 In hideous conflict dashed, or disappeared,  
 Driven at the boist'rous whirlwind's dreadful will ;  
 But when the sun's fair light returned, we see  
 Bodies of Grecians, and the wreck of ships  
 Float on the chafed foam of th' Ægean sea.  
 Us and our ship some god, the power of man  
 Were all too weak holding the helm preserved  
 Unhurt, or interceding for our safety ;  
 And fortune, the deliverer, steered our course  
 To shun the waves, that near the harbour's mouth  
 Boil high, or break upon the rocky shore.  
 Escaped th' engulfing sea, yet scarce secure  
 Of our escape, through the fair day we view  
 With sighs the recent sufferings of the host,  
 Cov'ring the sea with wrecks. If any breathe  
 This vital air, they deem us lost, as we  
 Think the same ruin theirs. Fair fall th' event !  
 But first and chief expect the Spartan king  
 T' arrive ; if yet one ray of yon bright sun  
 Beholds him living, through the care of Jove,  
 Who wills not to destroy that royal race,  
 Well may we hope to joy in his return.  
 Having heard this, know thou hast heard the truth.

CHORUS.

*Strophe 1.*

Is there to names a charm profound  
 Expressive of their fates assigned,  
 Mysterious potency of sound,

And truth in wondrous accord joined?  
 Why else this fatal name,  
 That Helen and destruction are the same?  
 Affianced in contention, led,  
 The spear her dowry, to the bridal bed;  
 With desolation in her train,  
 Fatal to martial hosts, to rampired towers,  
 From the rich fragrance of her gorgeous bowers,  
 Descending to the main,  
 She hastes to spread her flying sails,  
 And calls the earth-born zephyr's gales.  
 Whilst heroes, breathing vengeance, snatch their shields,  
 And trace her light oars o'er the pathless waves,  
 To the thick shades fresh waving o'er those fields,  
 Which Simois with his silver windings laves.

*Antistrophe 1.*

To Troy the shining mischief came;  
 Before her, young-eyed pleasures play;  
 But in the rear with steadfast aim  
 Grim-visaged vengeance marks his prey,  
 Waiting the dreadful hour  
 The terrors of offended Heaven to pour  
 On those that dared, an impious train,  
 The rites of hospitable Jove profane;  
 Nor revered that sacred song,  
 Whose melting strains the bride's approach declare,  
 As Hymen wakes the rapture breathing air.  
 Far other notes belong;  
 The voice of mirth now heard no more,  
 To Priam's State; its ruins o'er  
 Wailing instead, distress, and loud lament;  
 Long sorrows sprung from that unholy bed,

And many a curse in heart-felt anguish sent  
On its woe-wedded Paris' hated head.

*Strophe 2.*

The woodman, from his thirsty lair,  
Reft of his dam, a lion bore ;  
Fostered his future foe with care  
To mischiefs he must soon deplore :  
Gentle and tame, whilst young,  
Harmless he frisked the fondling babes among ;  
Oft in the father's bosom lay,  
Oft licked his feeding hand in fawning play ;  
Till, conscious of his firmer age,  
His lion-race the lordly savage shows ;  
No more his youth-protecting cottage knows,  
But with insatiate rage  
Flies on the flocks, a baleful guest,  
And riots in th' unbidden feast :  
Whilst through his mangled folds the hapless swain  
With horror sees th' unbounded carnage spread ;  
And learns too late that from th' infernal reign  
A priest of Até in his house was bred.

*Antistrophe 2.*

To Ilión's towers in wanton state  
With speed she wings her easy way ;  
Soft gales obedient round her wait,  
And pant on the delighted sea.  
Attendant on her side  
The richest ornaments of splendid pride :  
The darts, whose golden points inspire,  
Shot from her eyes the flames of soft desire ;  
The youthful bloom of rosy love,

That fills with ecstasy the willing soul :  
 With duteous zeal obey her sweet control.

But, such the doom of Jove,  
 Vindictive round her nuptial bed,  
 With threat'ning mien and footstep dread,  
 Rushes to Priam and his State severe,  
 To rend the bleeding heart his stern delight,  
 And from the bridal eye to force the tear,  
 Erinny's, rising from the realms of night.

*Epode.*

From ev'ry mouth we oft have heard  
 This saying, for its age revered :  
 "With joy we see our offspring rise,  
 And happy, who not childless dies :  
 But fortune, when her flow'rets blow,  
 Oft bears the bitter fruit of woe."  
 Though these saws are as truths allowed,  
 Thus I dare differ from the crowd :  
 "One base deed, with prolific power,  
 Like its cursed stock engenders more :  
 But to the just, with blooming grace  
 Still flourishes, a beauteous race."

The old Injustice joys to breed  
 Her young, instinct with villanous deed ;  
 The young her destined hour will find  
 To rush in mischief on mankind :  
 She too in Até's murky cell,  
 Brings forth the hideous child of hell,  
 A burden to th' offended sky,  
 The power of bold impiety.

But Justice bids her ray divine  
 E'en on the low-roofed cottage shine ;



And beams her glories on the life,  
 That knows not fraud, nor ruffian strife.  
 The gorgeous glare of gold, obtained  
 By foul polluted hands, disdained  
 She leaves, and with averted eyes  
 To humbler, holier mansions flies ;  
 And looking through the times to come  
 Assigns each deed its righteous doom.

## CHORUS, AGAMEMNON.

CHORUS. My royal lord, by whose victorious hand  
 The towers of Troy are fall'n, illustrious son  
 Of Atreus, with what words, what reverence  
 Shall I address thee, not t' o'erleap the bounds  
 Of modest duty, nor to sink beneath  
 An honourable welcome? Some there are,  
 That form themselves to seem, more than to be,  
 Transgressing honesty : to him that feels  
 Misfortune's rugged hand, full many a tongue  
 Shall drop condolence, though th' unfeeling heart  
 Knows not the touch of sorrow ; these again  
 In fortune's summer gale, with the like art,  
 Shall dress in forced smiles th' unwilling face :  
 But him the penetrating eye soon marks,  
 That in the seemly garb of honest zeal  
 Attempts to clothe his meagre blandishments.  
 When first in Helen's cause my royal lord  
 Levied his host, let me not hide the truth,  
 Notes, other than of music, echoed wide  
 In loud complaints from such as deemed him rash,  
 And void of reason, by constraint to plant  
 In breast averse the martial soul, that glows  
 Despising death. But now their eager zeal  
 Streams friendly to those chiefs, whose prosp'rous valour

Is crowned with conquest. Soon then shalt thou learn,  
As each supports the State, or strives to rend it  
With faction, who reveres thy dignity.

AGA. To Argos first, and to my country gods,  
I bow with reverence, by whose holy guidance  
On Troy's proud towers I poured their righteous vengeance,  
And now revisit safe my native soil.

No loud-tongued pleader heard, they judged the cause,  
And in the bloody urn, without one vote  
Dissentient, cast the lots that fixed the fate

Of Ilium and its sons : the other vase

Left empty, save of widowed hope. The smoke,

Rolling in dusky wreaths, shows that the town

Is fall'n ; the fiery storm yet lives, and high

The dying ashes toss rich clouds of wealth

Consumed. For this behoves us to the gods

Render our grateful thanks, and that they spread

The net of fate sweeping with angry ruin.

In beauty's cause the Argive monster reared

Its bulk enormous, to th' affrighted town

Portending devastation ; in its womb

Hiding embattled hosts, rushed furious forth,

About the setting of the Pleiades,

And, as a lion rav'ning for its prey,

Ramped o'er their walls, and lapped the blood of kings.

This to the gods addressed, I turn me now

Attentive to thy caution : I approve

Thy just remark, and with my voice confirm it.

Few have the fortitude of soul to honour

A friend's success, without a touch of envy ;

For that malignant passion to the heart

Cleaves close, and with a double burden loads

The man infected with it ; first he feels

In all their weight his own calamities,

Then sighs to see the happiness of others.  
 This of my own experience have I learned ;  
 And this I know, that many, who in public  
 Have borne the semblance of my firmest friends,  
 Are but the flatt'ring image of a shadow  
 Reflected from a mirror ; save Ulysses  
 Alone, who, though averse to join our arms  
 Yoked in his martial harness from my side  
 Swerved not ; living or dead be this his praise.  
 But what concerns our kingdom and the gods,  
 Holding a general council of the State,  
 We will consult ; that what is well may keep  
 Its goodness permanent, and what requires  
 Our healing hand, with mild severity  
 May be corrected. But my royal roof  
 Now will I visit, and before its hearths  
 Offer libations to the gods, who sent me  
 To this far distant war, and led me back.  
 Firm stands the victory that attends our arms.

CLYTEMNESTRA, AGAMEMNON, CHORUS.

CLYTEMNESTRA. Friends, fellow-citizens, whose counsels  
 The State of Argos, in your reverend presence [guide  
 A wife's fond love I blush not to disclose :  
 'Thus habit softens dread. From my full heart  
 Will I recount my melancholy life  
 Through the long stay of my loved lord at Troy :  
 For a weak woman, in her husband's absence,  
 Pensive to sit and lonely in her house,  
 'Tis dismal, list'ning to each frightful tale :  
 First one alarms her, then another comes  
 Charged with worse tidings. Had my poor lord here  
 Suffered as many wounds as common fame  
 Reported, like a net, he had been pierced :

Had he been slain oft as the loud-tongued rumour  
Was noised abroad, this triple-formed Geryon,  
A second of the name, whilst yet alive,  
For of the dead I speak not, well might boast  
To have received his triple mail, to die  
In each form singly. Such reports oppressed me,  
Till life became distasteful, and my hands  
Were prompted oft to deeds of desperation.  
Nor is thy son Orestes, the dear tie  
'That binds us each to th' other, present here  
To aid me, as he ought : nay, marvel not,  
The friendly Strophius with a right strong arm  
Protects him in Phocæa ; whilst his care  
Saw danger threat me in a double form,  
The loss of thee at Troy, the anarchy  
That might ensue, should madness drive the people  
To deeds of violence, as men are prompt  
Insultingly to trample on the fall'n :  
Such care dwells not with fraud. At thy return  
The gushing fountains of my tears are dried,  
Save that my eyes are weak with midnight watchings,  
Straining, through tears, if haply they might see  
Thy signal fires, that claimed my fixed attention.  
If they were closed in sleep, a silly fly  
Would, with its slightest murm'rings, make me start,  
And wake me to more fears. For thy dear sake  
All this I suffered : but my jocund heart  
Forgets it all, whilst I behold my lord,  
My guardian, the strong anchor of my hope,  
The stately column that supports my house,  
Dear as an only child to a fond parent ;  
Welcome as land, which the tossed mariner  
Beyond his hope descries ; welcome as day  
After a night of storms with fairer beams

Returning ; welcome as the liquid lapse  
Of fountain to the thirsty traveller :  
So pleasant is it to escape the chain  
Of hard constraint. Such greeting I esteem  
Due to thy honour : let it not offend,  
For I have suffered much. But, my loved lord,  
Leave now that car ; nor on the bare ground set  
That royal foot, beneath whose mighty tread  
Troy trembled. Haste, ye virgins, to whose care  
This pleasing office is intrusted, spread  
The streets with tapestry ; let the ground be covered  
With richest purple, leading to the palace ;  
That honour with just state may grace his entry,  
Though unexpected. My attentive care  
Shall, if the gods permit, dispose the rest  
To welcome his high glories, as I ought.

AGA. Daughter of Leda, guardian of my house,  
Thy words are correspondent to my absence,  
Of no small length. With better grace my praise  
Would come from others : soothe me not with strains  
Of adulation, as a girl ; nor raise,  
As to some proud barbaric king, that loves  
Loud acclamations echoed from the mouths  
Of prostrate worshippers, a clamorous welcome :  
Nor spread the streets with tapestry ; 'tis invidious ;  
'These are the honours we should pay the gods.  
For mortal man to tread on ornaments  
Of rich embroidery—No : I dare not do it :  
Respect me as a man, not as a god.  
Why should my foot pollute these vests, that glow  
With various tintured radiance ? My full fame  
Swells high without it ; and the temperate rule  
Of cool discretion is the choicest gift  
Of favouring Heaven. Happy the man, whose life

Is spent in friendship's calm security.

These sober joys be mine, I ask no more.

CLY. Do not thou thwart the purpose of my mind.

AGA. My mind, be well assured, shall not be tainted.

CLY. Hast thou in fear made to the gods this vow?

AGA. Free, from my soul in prudence have I said it.

CLY. Had Priam's arms prevailed, how had he acted?

AGA. On rich embroidery he had proudly trod.

CLY. Then dread not thou th' invidious tongues of men.

AGA. Yet has the popular voice much potency.

CLY. But the unenvied is not of the happy.

AGA. Ill suits it thy soft sex to love contention.

CLY. To yield sometimes adds honour to the mighty.

AGA. Art thou so earnest to obtain thy wish?

CLY. Let me prevail : indulge me with this conquest.

AGA. If such thy will, haste some one, from my feet

Unloose these high-bound buskins, lest some god

Look down indignant, if with them I press

These vests sea-tinctured : shame it were to spoil

With unclean tread their rich and costly texture.

Of these enough.—This stranger, let her find

A gentle treatment : from high Heaven the god

Looks with an eye of favour on the victor

That bears his high state meekly ; for none wears

Of his free choice the yoke of slavery.

And she, of many treasures the prime flower

Selected by the troops, has followed me.

Well, since I yield me vanquished by thy voice,

I go, treading on purple, to my house.

CLY. Does not the sea, and who shall drain it, yield

Unfailing stores of these rich tints, that glow

With purple radiance? These this lordly house

Commands, blest with abundance, but to want

A stranger. I had vowed his foot should tread

On many a vestment, when the victims bled,  
 The hallowed pledge which this fond breast devised  
 For his return. For whilst the vig'rous root  
 Maintains its grasp, the stately head shall rise,  
 And with its waving foliage screen the house  
 From the fierce dog-star's fiery pestilence.  
 And on thy presence at thy household hearth,  
 Ev'n the cold winter feels a genial warmth.  
 But when the hot sun in the unripe grape  
 Matures the wine, the husband's perfect virtues  
 Spread a refreshing coolness. Thou, O Jove,  
 Source of perfection, perfect all my vows,  
 And with thy influence favour my intents !

CHORUS.

*Strophe 1.*

What may this mean ? Along the skies  
 Why do these dreadful portents roll ?  
 Visions of terror, spare my aching eyes,  
 Nor shake my sad presaging soul !  
 In accents dread, not tuned in vain,  
 Why bursts the free, unbidden strain ?  
 These are no phantoms of the night,  
 That vanish at the faithful light  
 Of steadfast confidence. Thou sober power,  
 Whither, ah, whither art thou gone ?  
 For since the long-passed hour,  
 When first for Troy the naval band  
 Unmoored their vessels from the strand,  
 Thou hast not in my bosom fixed thy throne.

*Antistrophe 1.*

At length they come : these faithful eyes,  
 See them returned to Greece again :

Yet, while the sullen lyre in silence lies,  
 Erinnys wakes the mournful strain :  
 Her dreadful powers possess my soul,  
 And bid the untaught measures roll ;  
 Swell in rude notes the dismal lay,  
 And fright enchanting hope away ;  
 Whilst, ominous of ill, grim-visaged care  
 Incessant whirls my tortured heart.  
 Vain be each anxious fear !  
 Return, fair hope, thy seat resume,  
 Dispel this melancholy gloom,  
 And to my soul thy gladsome light impart !

*Strophe 2.*

Ah me, what hope ! This mortal state  
 Nothing but cruel change can know.  
 Should cheerful health our vig'rous steps await,  
 Enkindling all her roseate glow ;  
 Disease creeps on with silent pace,  
 And withers ev'ry blooming grace.  
 Proud sails the barque ; the fresh gales breathe,  
 And dash her on the rocks beneath.  
 In the rich house her treasures plenty pours ;  
 Comes sloth, and from her well-poised sling  
 Scatters the piled up stores.  
 Yet disease makes not all her prey :  
 Nor sinks the barque beneath the sea :  
 And famine sees the heaven-sent harvest spring.

*Antistrophe 2.*

But when forth-welling from the wound  
 The purple-streaming blood shall fall,  
 And the warm tide distain the reeking ground,  
 Who shall the vanished life recall ?



Nor verse, nor music's magic power,  
 Nor the famed leech's boasted lore ;  
 Not that his art restored the dead,  
 Jove's thunder burst upon his head.  
 But that the Fates forbid, and chain my tongue,  
 My heart, at inspiration's call,  
     Would the rapt strain prolong :  
 Now all is dark ; it raves in vain,  
 And, as it pants with trembling pain,  
 Desponding feels its fiery transports fall.

CLYTEMNESTRA, CASSANDRA, CHORUS.

CLYTEMNESTRA. Thou too, Cassandra, enter ; since high  
 Jove,  
 Gracious to thee, hath placed thee in this house,  
 With many slaves to share the common rites,  
 And deck the altar of the fav'ring god.  
 Come from that chariot, and let temperance rule  
 Thy lofty spirit : ev'n Alcmena's son,  
 Sold as a slave, submitted to the yoke  
 Perforce ; and if necessity's hard hand  
 Hath sunk thee to this fortune, our high rank,  
 With greatness long acquainted, knows to use  
 Its power with gentleness : the low-born wretch,  
 That from his mean degree rises at once  
 To unexpected riches, treats his slaves  
 With barbarous and unbounded insolence.  
 From us thou wilt receive a juster treatment.

CHOR. These are plain truths : since in the toils of fate  
 Thou art enclosed, submit, if thou canst brook  
 Submission ; haply I advise in vain.

CLY. If that her language, like the twittering swallow's,  
 Be not all barbarous and unknown, my words  
 Within shall with persuasion move her mind.

CHOR. She speaks what best beseems thy present state ;

Follow, submit, and leave that lofty car.

CLY. I have not leisure here before the gates  
T' attend on her ; for at the inmost altar,  
Blazing with sacred fires, the victims stand  
Devoted to the gods for his return  
So much beyond our hopes. If to comply  
Thou form thy mind, delay not : if thy tongue  
Knows not to sound our language, let thy signs  
Supply the place of words, speak with thy hand.

CHOR. Of foreign birth she understands us not :  
But as new taken struggles in the net.

CLY. 'Tis frenzy this, the impulse of a mind  
Disordered ; from a city lately taken  
She comes, and knows not how to bear the curb,  
Till she has spent her rage in bloody foam.  
But I no more waste words to be disdained.

CHOR. My words, for much I pity her, shall bear  
No mark of anger. Go, unhappy fair one,  
Forsake thy chariot, unreluctant learn  
To bear this new yoke of necessity.

CAS. Woe, woe ! O Earth ! Apollo, O Apollo !

CHOR. Why with that voice of woe invoke Apollo ?  
Ill do these notes of grief accord with him.

CAS. Woe, woe ! O Earth ! Apollo, O Apollo !

CHOR. Again her inauspicious voice invokes  
The god, whose ears are not attuned to woe.

CAS. Apollo, O Apollo, fatal leader,  
Yet once more, god, thou ledest me to ruin !

CHOR. She seems prophetic of her own misfortunes,  
Retaining, though a slave, the divine spirit.

CAS. Apollo, O Apollo, fatal leader,  
Ah, whither hast thou led me ? to what house ?

CHOR. Is that unknown ? Let me declare it then ;  
This is the royal mansion of th' Atridæ.

CAS. It is a mansion hated by the gods,  
Conscious to many a foul and horrid deed ;  
A slaughter-house, that reeks with human gore.

CHOR. This stranger seems, like the nice-scented hound,  
Quick in the trace of blood, which she will find.

CAS. These are convincing proofs. Look there, look  
Whilst pity drops a tear, the children butchered, [there,  
The father feasting on their roasted flesh !

CHOR. Thy fame, prophetic virgin, we have heard ;  
We know thy skill ; but wish no prophets now.

CAS. Ye powers of Heaven, what does she now design ?  
What new and dreadful deed of woe is this ?  
What dreadful ill designs she in the house,  
Intolerable, irreparable mischief,  
Whilst far she sends the succouring power away ?

CHOR. These prophecies surpass my apprehension ;  
The first I knew, they echo through the city.

CAS. Ah ! daring wretch, dost thou achieve this deed,  
Thus in the bath the partner of thy bed  
Refreshing ? How shall I relate th' event ?  
Yet speedy shall it be. Ev'n now advanced  
Hand above hand extended threatens high.

CHOR. I comprehend her not ; her words are dark,  
Perplexing me like abstruse oracles.

CAS. Ah ! What is this, that I see here before me ?  
Is it the net of hell ? Or rather hers,  
Who shares the bed and plans the murderous deed.  
Let discord, whose insatiable rage  
Pursues this race, howl through the royal rooms  
Against the victim destined to destruction.

CHOR. What fury dost thou call within this house  
To hold her orgies ? The dread invocation

Appals me ; to my heart the purple drops  
Flow back ; a deathlike mist covers my eyes,  
With expectation of some sudden ruin.

CAS. See, see there : from the heifer keep the bull !  
O'er his black brows she throws th' entangling vest,  
And smites him with her huge two-handed engine.  
He falls, amidst the cleansing laver falls :  
I tell thee of the bath, the treach'rous bath.

CHOR. T' unfold the obscure oracles of Heaven  
Is not my boast ; beneath the shadowing veil  
Misfortune lies : when did th' inquirer learn  
From the dark sentence an event of joy ?  
From time's first records the diviner's voice  
Gives the sad heart a sense of misery.

CAS. Ah me, unhappy ! Wretched, wretched fate !  
For my own sufferings joined call forth these wailings.  
Why hast thou brought me hither ? Wretched me !  
Is it for this, that I may die with him ?

CHOR. This is the frenzy of a mind possessed  
With wildest ravings. Thy own woes thou wailest  
In mournful melody ; like the sweet bird,  
That darkling pours her never-ceasing plaint ;  
And for her Itys, her lost Itys, wastes  
In sweetest woe her melancholy life.

CAS. Ah me ! the fortune of the nightingale  
Is to be envied : on her light-poised plumes  
She wings at will her easy way, nor knows  
The anguish of a tear, whilst o'er my head  
Th' impending sword threatens the fatal wound.

CHOR. Whence is this violent, this wild presage  
Of ill ? Thy fears are vain ; yet with a voice  
That terrifies, though sweet, aloud thou speakest  
Thy sorrows. Whence hast thou derived these omens,  
Thus deeply marked with characters of death ?

CAS. Alas! the bed, the bridal bed of Paris,  
Destructive to his friends! Paternal stream,  
Scamander, on thy banks with careless steps  
My childhood strayed: but now methinks I go,  
Alas, how soon! to prophesy around  
Cocytus, and the banks of Acheron!

CHOR. Perspicuous this, and clear! the new-born babe  
Might comprehend it; but thy piercing griefs,  
Bewailing thus the miseries of thy fate,  
Strike deep; they wound me to my very soul.

CAS. Ah, my poor country, my poor bleeding country,  
Fall'n, fall'n for ever! And you, sacred altars,  
That blazed before my father's towered palace,  
Not all your victims could avert your doom!  
And on the earth soon shall my warm blood flow.

CHOR. This is consistent with thy former ravings.  
Or does some god indeed incumbent press  
Thy soul, and modulate thy voice to utter  
These lamentable notes of woe and death?  
What th' event shall be, exceeds my knowledge.

CAS. The oracle no more shall shroud its visage  
Beneath a veil, as a new bride that blushes  
To meet the gazing eye; but like the sun,  
When with his orient ray he gilds the east,  
Shall burst upon you in a flood of light,  
Disclosing deeds of deeper dread. Away,  
Ye mystic coverings! And you, reverend men,  
Bear witness to me, that with steady step  
I trace foul deeds that smell above the earth.  
For never shall that band, whose yelling notes  
In dismal accord pierce th' affrighted ear,  
Forsake this house. The genius of the feast,  
Drunk with the blood of men, and fired from thence  
To bolder daring, ranges through the rooms

Linked with his kindred Furies : these possess  
 The mansion, and in horrid measures chant  
 The first base deed ; recording with abhorrence  
 Th' adulterous lust, that stained a brother's bed.  
 What, like a skilful archer, have I lodged  
 My arrow in the mark ? No trifling this,  
 T' alarm you with false sounds. But swear to me,  
 In solemn attestation, that I know,  
 And speak the old offences of this house.

CHOR. In such a rooted ill what healing power  
 Resides there in an oath ? But much I marvel  
 That thou, the native of a foreign realm,  
 Of foreign tongue, canst speak our language freely,  
 As Greece had been thy constant residence.

CAS. Apollo graced me with this skill. At first  
 The curb of modesty was on my tongue.

CHOR. Did the god feel the force of young desire ?  
 In each gay breast ease fans the wanton flame.

CAS. With all the fervour of impatient love  
 He strove to gratify my utmost wish.

CHOR. And didst thou listen to his tempting lures ?

CAS. First I assented, then deceived the god.

CHOR. Wast thou then fraught with these prophetic arts ?

CAS. Even then I told my country all its woes.

CHOR. The anger of the god fell heavy on thee ?

CAS. My voice, for this offence, lost all persuasion.

CHOR. To us it seems a voice of truth divine.

CAS. Woe, woe is me ! Again the furious power  
 Swells in my lab'ring breast ; again commands  
 My bursting voice ; and what I speak is fate.  
 Look, look, behold those children. There they sit ;  
 Such are the forms, that in the troubled night  
 Distract our sleep. By a friend's hands they died :  
 Are these the ties of blood ? See, in their hands

Their mangled limbs, horrid repast, they bear :  
 Th' invited father shares th' accursed feast.  
 For this the sluggard savage, that at ease  
 Rolls on his bed, nor rouses from his lair,  
 'Gainst my returning lord, for I must wear  
 The yoke of slavery, plans the dark design  
 Of death. Ah me ! the chieftain of the fleet,  
 The vanquisher of Troy, but little knows  
 What the smooth tongue of mischief, filed to words  
 Of glozing courtesy, with fate her friend,  
 Like Até ranging in the dark can do  
 Calmly : such deeds a woman dares : she dares  
 Murder a man. What shall I call this mischief ?  
 An Amphisbæna ? or a Scylla rather,  
 That in the vexed rocks holds her residence,  
 And meditates the mariner's destruction ?  
 Mother of Hell, 'midst friends enkindling discord  
 And hate implacable ! With dreadful daring  
 How did she shout, as if the battle swerved ?  
 Yet with feigned joy she welcomes his return.  
 These words may want persuasion. What of that ?  
 What must come, will come : and ere long with grief  
 Thou shalt confess my prophecies are true.

CHOR. Thyestes' bloody feast oft have I heard of,  
 Always with horror ; and I tremble now  
 Hearing th' unaggravated truth. What else  
 She utters, leads my wand'ring thoughts astray  
 In wild uncertainty.

CAS. Then mark me well,  
 Thou shalt behold the death of Agamemnon.

CHOR. To better omens tune that voice unblest,  
 Or in eternal silence be it sunk.

CAS. This is an ill no medicine can heal.

CHOR. Not if it happens : but avert it, Heaven !

CAS. To pray be thine ; the murd'rous deed is theirs.

CHOR. What man dares perpetrate this dreadful act ?

CAS. How widely dost thou wander from my words ?

CHOR. I heard not whose bold hand should do the deed.

CAS. Yet speak I well the language of your Greece.

CHOR. The gift of Phœbus this ; no trivial grace.

CAS. Ah, what a sudden flame comes rushing on me !

I burn, I burn. Apollo, O Apollo !

This lioness, that in a sensual sty

Rolled with the wolf, the generous lion absent,

Will kill me. And the sorc'ress, as she brews

Her philtred cup, will drug it with my blood.

She glories, as against her husband's life

She whets the axe, her vengeance falls on him

For that he came accompanied by me.

Why do I longer wear these useless honours,

This laurel wand, and these prophetic wreaths ?

Away ; before I die I cast you from me ;

Lie there, and perish ; I am rid of you ;

Or deck the splendid ruin of some other.

Apollo rends from me these sacred vestments,

Who saw me in his rich habiliments

Mocked 'midst my friends, doubtless without a cause.

When in opprobrious terms they jeered my skill,

And treated me as a poor vagrant wretch,

That told events from door to door for bread,

I bore it all : but now the prophet god,

That with his own arts graced me, sinks me down

To this low ruin. As my father fell

Butchered ev'n at the altar, like the victim's

My warm blood at the altar shall be shed :

Nor shall we die unhonoured by the gods.

He comes, dreadful in punishment, the son

Of this bad mother, by her death t' avenge



His murdered father : distant though he roams,  
 An outcast and an exile, by his friends  
 Fenced from these deeds of violence, he comes  
 In solemn vengeance for his father laid  
 Thus low. But why for foreign miseries  
 Does the tear darken in my eye, that saw  
 The fall of Ilium, and its haughty conquerors  
 In righteous judgment thus receive their meed ?  
 But forward now ; I go to close the scene,  
 Nor shrink from death. I have a vow in heaven :  
 And further, I adjure these gates of hell,  
 Well may the blow be aimed, that whilst my blood  
 Flows in a copious stream, I may not feel  
 The fierce, convulsive agonies of death ;  
 But gently sink, and close my eyes in peace.

CHOR. Unhappy, in thy knowledge most unhappy,  
 Long have thy sorrows flowed. But if indeed  
 Thou dost foresee thy death, why, like the heifer  
 Led by a heavenly impulse, do thy steps  
 Advance thus boldly to the cruel altar ?

CAS. I could not by delay escape my fate.

CHOR. Yet is there some advantage in delay.

CAS. The day is come : by flight I should gain little.

CHOR. Thy boldness adds to thy unhappiness.

CAS. None of the happy shuns his destined end.

CHOR. True ; but to die with glory crowns our praise.

CAS. So died my father, so his noble sons.

CHOR. What may this mean ? Why backward dost thou  
 start ?

Do thy own thoughts with horror strike thy soul ?

CAS. The scent of blood and death breathes from this  
 house.

CHOR. The victims now are bleeding at the altar.

CAS. 'Tis such a smell as issues from the tomb.

CHOR. This is no Syrian odour in the house.

CAS. Such though it be, I enter to bewail  
My fate, and Agamemnon's. To have lived,  
Let it suffice. And think not, gen'rous strangers,  
Like the poor bird that flutters o'er the bough,  
Through fear I linger. But my dying words  
You will remember, when her blood shall flow  
For mine, woman's for woman's: and the man's,  
For his that falls by his accursed wife.

CHOR. Thy fate, poor sufferer, fills my eyes with tears.

CAS. Yet once more let me raise my mournful voice.  
Thou sun, whose rising beams shall bless no more  
These closing eyes! You, whose vindictive rage  
Hangs o'er my hated murderers, oh avenge me,  
Though, a poor slave, I fall an easy prey!  
This is the state of man: in prosperous fortune  
A shadow, passing light, throws to the ground  
Joy's baseless fabric: in adversity  
Comes malice with a sponge moistened in gall,  
And wipes each beauteous character away:  
More than the first this melts my soul to pity.

CHOR. By nature man is formed with boundless wishes  
For prosperous fortune; and the great man's door  
Stands ever open to that envied person,  
On whom she smiles; but enter not with words,  
Like this poor sufferer, of such dreadful import.  
His arms the powers of Heaven have graced with conquest;  
Troy's proud walls lie in dust; and he returns  
Crowned by the gods with glory: but if now  
His blood must for the blood there shed atone,  
If he must die for those that died, too dearly  
He buys his triumph. Who of mortal men  
Hears this, and dares to think his state secure?

AGA. [*within*] Oh! I am wounded with a deadly blow.

SEMICHOR. List, list. What cry is this of wounds and death?

AGA. Wounded again, oh, basely, basely murdered!

## SEMICHORUS.

'Tis the king's cry ; the dreadful deed is doing.

What shall we do? What measures shall we form?

What if we spread th' alarm, and with our outcries

Call at the palace gates the citizens?

Nay rather rush we in, and prove the deed,

Whilst the fresh blood is reeking on the sword.

I readily concur ; determine then ;

For something must be done, and instantly.

That's evident. This bloody prelude threatens

More deeds of violence and tyranny.

We linger : those that tread the paths of honour,

Late though she meets them, sleep not in their task.

Perplexity and doubt distract my thoughts :

Deeds of high import ask maturest counsel.

Such are my thoughts, since fruitless were th' attempt

By all our pleas to raise the dead to life.

To save our wretched lives then shall we bow

To these imperious lords, these stains of honour?

That were a shame indeed! No ; let us die :

Death is more welcome than such tyranny.

Shall we then take these outcries, which we heard,

For proofs, and thence conclude the king is slain?

We should be well assured ere we pronounce :

To know, and to conjecture, differ widely.

There's reason in thy words. Best enter then,

And see what fate attends the son of Atreus.

CLYTEMNESTRA, CHORUS.

CLYTEMNESTRA. To many a fair speech suited to the  
 If my words now be found at variance, [times,  
 I shall not blush. For when the heart conceives  
 Thoughts of deep vengeance on a foe, what means  
 T' achieve the deed more certain, than to wear  
 The form of friendship, and with circling wiles  
 Enclose him in th' insuperable net?  
 This was no hasty, rash-conceived design;  
 But formed with deep, premeditated thought,  
 Incensed with wrongs; and often have I stood,  
 T' assay the execution, where he fell;  
 And planned it so, for I with pride avow it,  
 He had no power t' escape, or to resist,  
 Entangled in the gorgeous robe, that shone  
 Fatally rich. I struck him twice, and twice  
 He groaned, then died. A third time as he lay  
 I gored him with a wound, a grateful present  
 To the stern god, that in the realms below  
 Reigns o'er the dead: there let him take his seat.  
 He lay; and spouting from his wounds a stream  
 Of blood, bedewed me with these crimson drops.  
 I glory in them, like the genial earth,  
 When the warm showers of heaven descend, and wake  
 The flow'rets to unfold their vermeil leaves.  
 Come then, ye reverend senators of Argos,  
 Joy with me, if your hearts be tuned to joy;  
 And such I wish them. Were it decent now  
 To pour libations o'er the dead, with justice  
 It might be done; for his injurious pride  
 Filled for this house the cup of desolation,  
 Fated himself to drain it to the dregs.

CHOR. We are astonished at thy daring words,  
 Thus vaunting o'er the ruins of thy husband.

CLY. Me, like a witless woman, wouldst thou fright?  
 I tell thee, my firm soul disdains to fear.  
 Be thou disposed t' applaud, or censure me,  
 I reckon it not: there Agamemnon lies,  
 My husband, slaughtered by this hand: I dare  
 Avow his death, and justify the deed.

CHOR. What poison hath the baleful-teeming earth,  
 Or the chafed billows of the foamy sea,  
 Given thee for food, or mingled in thy cup,  
 To work thee to this frenzy? Thy cursed hand  
 Hath struck, hath slain. For this thy country's wrath  
 Shall in just vengeance burst upon thy head,  
 And with abhorrence drive thee from the city.

CLY. And dost thou now denounce upon my head  
 Vengeance, and hate, and exile? 'Gainst this man  
 Urging no charge? Yet he without remorse,  
 As if a lamb that wantoned in his pastures  
 Were doomed to bleed, could sacrifice his daughter,  
 For whose dear sake I felt a mother's pains,  
 T' appease the winds of Thrace. Should not thy voice  
 Adjudge this man to exile, in just vengeance  
 For such unholy deeds? Scarce hast thou heard  
 What I have done, but sentence is pronounced,  
 And that with rigour too. But mark me well,  
 I boldly tell thee that I bear a soul  
 Prepared for either fortune; if thy hand  
 Be stronger, use thy power: but if the gods  
 Prosper my cause, be thou assured, old man,  
 Thou shalt be taught a lesson of discretion.

CHOR. Aspiring are thy thoughts, and thy proud vaunts  
 Swell with disdain; ev'n yet thy madding mind  
 Is drunk with slaughter; with a savage grace  
 The thick blood stains thine eye. But soon thy friends  
 Faithless shall shrink from thy unsheltered side,  
 And leave thee to just vengeance, blow for blow.

CLY. Hear then this solemn oath : By that revenge,  
 Which for my daughter I have greatly taken ;  
 By the dread powers of Até and Erinnys,  
 To whom my hand devoted him a victim,  
 Without a thought of fear I range these rooms,  
 Whilst present to my aid Ægisthus stands,  
 As he hath stood, guarding my social hearth :  
 He is my shield, my strength, my confidence.  
 Here lies my base betrayer, who at Troy  
 Could revel in the arms of each Chryseis ;  
 He, and his captive minion ; she that marked  
 Portents and prodigies, and with ominous tongue  
 Presaged the Fates ; a wanton harlotry,  
 True to the rower's benches : their just meed  
 Have they received. See where he lies ; and she,  
 That like the swan warbled her dying notes,  
 His paranymphe lies with him, to my bed  
 Leaving the darling object of my wishes.

CHOR. No slow-consuming pains, to torture us  
 Fixed to the groaning couch, await us now ;  
 But fate comes rushing on, and brings the sleep  
 That wakes no more. There lies the king, whose virtues  
 Were truly royal. In a woman's cause  
 He suffered much ; and by a woman perished.  
 Ah fatal Helen ! in the fields of Troy  
 How many has thy guilt, thy guilt alone,  
 Stretched in the dust ? But now by murd'rous hands  
 Hast thou sluiced out this rich and noble blood,  
 Whose foul stains never can be purged. This ruin  
 Hath discord, raging in the house, effected.

CLY. Wish not for death ; nor bow beneath thy griefs ;  
 Nor turn thy rage on Helen, as if she  
 Had drenched the fields with blood, as she alone  
 Fatal to Greece had caused these dreadful ills.

CHOR. Tremendous fiend, that breathest through this house  
 Thy baleful spirit, and with equal daring  
 Hast steeled these royal sisters to fierce deeds  
 That rend my soul, now, like the baleful raven,  
 Incumbent o'er the body dost thou joy  
 T' affright us with thy harsh and dissonant notes!

CLY. There's sense in this: now hast thou touched the key,  
 Rousing the fury that from sire to son  
 Hath bade the stream of blood, first poured by her,  
 Descend: one sanguine tide scarce rolled away,  
 Another flows in terrible succession.

CHOR. And dost thou glory in these deeds of death,  
 This vengeance of the fury? Thus to pride thee  
 In ruin, and the havoc of thy house,  
 Becomes thee ill. Ah! 'tis a higher power,  
 That thus ordains: we see the hand of Jove,  
 Whose will directs the fate of mortal man.  
 My king, my royal lord, what words can show  
 My grief, my reverence for thy princely virtues!  
 Art thou thus fall'n, caught in a cobweb snare,  
 By impious murder breathing out thy life?  
 Art thou thus fall'n, ah the disloyal bed!  
 Secretly slaughtered by a treach'rous hand?

CLY. Thou say'st, and say'st aloud, I did this deed:  
 Say not that I, that Agamemnon's wife,  
 Did it: the fury, fatal to this house,  
 In vengeance for Thyestes' horrid feast,  
 Assumed this form, and with her ancient rage  
 Hath for the children sacrificed the man.

CHOR. That thou art guiltless of this blood, what proof,  
 What witness? From the father, in his cause,  
 Rise an avenger! Stained with the dark streams  
 Of kindred blood fierce waves the bick'ring sword,  
 And points the ruthless boy to deeds of horror.

My king, my royal lord, what words can show  
 My grief, my reverence for thy princely virtues !  
 Art thou thus fall'n, caught in a cobweb snare,  
 By impious murder breathing out thy life ?  
 Art thou thus fall'n, ah the disloyal bed !  
 Secretly slaughtered by a treach'rous hand ?

CLY. No : of his death far otherwise I deem,  
 Nothing disloyal. Nor with secret guile  
 Wrought he his murd'rous mischiefs on this house.  
 For my sweet flow'ret, opening from his stein,  
 My Iphigenia, my lamented child,  
 Whom he unjustly slew, he justly died.  
 Nor let him glory in the shades below ;  
 For as he taught his sword to thirst for blood,  
 So by the thirsty sword his blood was shed.

CHOR. Perplexed and troubled in my anxious thought,  
 Amidst the ruins of this house, despair  
 Hangs heavy on me. Drop by drop no more  
 Descends the shower of blood ; but the wild storm  
 In one red torrent shakes the solid walls ;  
 Whilst vengeance, ranging through the deathful scene,  
 For further mischief whets her fatal sword.

SEMICHOR. O Earth, that I had rested in thy bosom,  
 Ere I had seen him lodged with thee, and shrunk  
 To the brief compass of a silver urn !  
 Who shall attend the rites of sepulture ?  
 Who shall lament him ? Thou, whose hand has shed  
 Thy husband's blood, wilt thou dare raise the voice  
 Of mourning o'er him ? Thy unhallowed hand  
 Renders these honours, should they come from thee,  
 Unwelcome to his shade. What faithful tongue,  
 Fond to recount his great and godlike acts,  
 Shall steep in tears his funeral eulogy ?

CLY. This care concerns not thee : by us he fell,



By us he died ; and we will bury him  
 With no domestic grief. But Iphigenia,  
 His daughter, as is meet, jocund and blithe  
 Shall meet him on the banks of that sad stream,  
 The flood of sorrow, and with filial duty  
 Hang fondling on her father's neck, and kiss him.

CHOR. Thus insult treads on insult. Of these things  
 Hard is it to decide. Th' infected stain  
 Communicates th' infection ; murder calls  
 For blood ; and outrage on th' injurious head,  
 At Jove's appointed time, draws outrage down.  
 Thus, by the laws of nature, son succeeds  
 To sire ; and who shall drive him from the house ?

CLY. These are the oracles of truth. But hear me ;  
 It likes me to the genius of the race  
 Of Plisthenes to swear that what is past,  
 Though poor the satisfaction, bounds my wishes.  
 Hither he comes no more : no, let him stain  
 Some other house with gore. For me, some poor,  
 Some scanty pittance of the goods contents me,  
 Well satisfied that from this house I've driven  
 These frantic Furies red with kindred blood.

ÆGISTHUS, CLYTEMNESTRA, CHORUS.

ÆGISTHUS. Hail to this joyful day, whose welcome light  
 Brings vengeance ! Now I know that the just gods  
 Look from their skies, and punish impious mortals,  
 Seeing this man rolled in the blood-wove woof,  
 The tissue of the Furies, grateful sight,  
 And suffering for his father's fraudulent crimes.  
 Atreus, his father, sovereign of this land,  
 Brooking no rival in his power, drove out  
 My father and his brother, poor Thyestes,  
 A wretched exile : from his country far

He wandered ; but at length returned, and stood  
 A suppliant before the household gods,  
 Secure in their protection that his blood  
 Should not distain the pavement. This man's father,  
 The sacrilegious Atreus, with more show  
 Of courtesy than friendship, spread the feast ;  
 Devoting, such the fair pretence, the day  
 To hospitality and genial mirth :  
 Then to my father in that feast served up  
 The flesh of his own sons : their hands and feet  
 Hacked off before, their undistinguished parts  
 He eat, without suspicion eat, a food  
 Destructive to the race. But when he knew  
 Th' unhallowed deed, he raised a mournful cry,  
 And starting up with horror spurned to the ground  
 The barb'rous banquet, utt'ring many a curse  
 Of deepest vengeance on the house of Pelops.  
 Thus perish all the race of Plisthenes !  
 And for this cause thou seest him fall'n ! His death  
 With justice I devised ; for me he chased,  
 The thirteenth son, an infant in my cradle,  
 With my unhappy father. Nursed abroad,  
 Vengeance led back my steps, and taught my hand  
 From far to reach him. All this plan of ruin  
 Was mine, reckless of what ensues ; ev'n death  
 Were glorious, now he lies caught in my vengeance.

CHOR. T' embitter ills with insult, this, Ægisthus,  
 I praise not. Thou, of thine own free accord,  
 Hast slain this man ; such is thy boast ; this plan  
 Of ruin, which we mourn, is thine alone.  
 But be thou well assured thou shalt not 'scape,  
 When, roused to justice, the avenging people  
 Shall hurl their stones with curses on thy head.

ÆGIS. From thee, who labourest at the lowest oar,

This language, and to him that holds the helm !  
 Thou shalt be taught, old man, what at thy age  
 Is a hard lesson, prudence. Chains and hunger,  
 Besides the load of age, have sovereign virtue  
 To physic the proud heart. Behold this sight ;  
 Does it not ope thine eyes ? Rest quiet then ;  
 Contend not with the strong ; there's danger in it.

CHOR. And could thy softer sex, whilst the rough war  
 Demands its chieftain, violate his bed,  
 And on his first return contrive his death ?

ÆGIS. No more : this sounds th' alarm to rude com-  
 plaints.

The voice of Orpheus with its soothing notes  
 Attracted ev'n the savage ; whilst thy yells  
 To rage inflame the gentle : but take heed ;  
 Dungeons and chains may teach thee moderation.

CHOR. Shalt thou reign king in Argos ? Thou, whose  
 soul  
 Plotted this murder ; whilst thy coward hand  
 Shrank back, nor dared to execute the deed ?

ÆGIS. Wiles and deceit are female qualities :  
 The memory of my ancient enmity  
 Had waked suspicion. Master of his treasures,  
 Be it my next attempt to gain the people :  
 Whome'er I find unwilling to submit,  
 Him, like a high-fed and unruly horse  
 Reluctant to the harness, rigour soon  
 Shall tame : confinement, and her meagre comrade,  
 Keen hunger, will abate his fiery mettle.

CHOR. Did not the baseness of thy coward soul  
 Unman thee to this murder, that a woman,  
 Shame to her country and her country's gods,  
 Must dare the horrid deed ? But when Orestes,  
 Where'er he breathes the vital air, returns,

Good fortune be his guide, shall not his hand  
Take a bold vengeance in the death of both?

ÆGIS. Such since thy thoughts and words, soon shalt  
thou feel——

CHOR. Help, ho! soldiers and friends; the danger's  
near;

Help, ho! advance in haste with your drawn swords!

ÆGIS. My sword is drawn: Ægisthus dares to die.

CHOR. Prophetic be thy words! We hail the omen.

CLY. Dearest of men, do not heap ills on ills:  
I wish not to exasperate, but to heal,  
Misfortune's past: enough is given to vengeance;  
Let no more blood be spilt. Go then, old men,  
Each to your homes; go, whilst ye may, in peace.  
What hath been done the rigour of the times  
Compelled, and hard necessity; the weight  
Of these afflictions, grievous as they are,  
By too severe a doom falls on our heads.  
Disdain not to be taught, though by a woman.

ÆGIS. Ay; but to hear this vain, tongue-doughty babbler,  
Lavish of speech that tempts to desperate deeds,  
It moves me from the firmness of my temper.

CHOR. An Argive scorns to fawn on guilty greatness.

ÆGIS. My vengeance shall o'ertake thee at the last.

CHOR. Not if just Heaven shall guide Orestes hither.

ÆGIS. An exile, I well know, feeds on vain hopes.

CHOR. Go on then, gorge with blood; thou hast the  
ineans.

ÆGIS. This folly, be assured, shall cost thee dear.

CHOR. The craven, in her presence, rears his crest.

CLY. Slight men, regard them not; but let us enter,  
Assume our state, and order all things well.

## THE CHOEPHORÆ.

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THE Chorus in the former play, with a dignity and firmness becoming senators of Argos, had expressed their abhorrence of the murder of Agamemnon even to the face of Clytemnestra and Ægisthus, and threatened them with the anger of the gods and the vengeance of Orestes: this is here executed.

The characters of Orestes and Electra are finely supported. A pious resentment of the murder of his father, a consciousness of his own high rank, and a just indignation at the injuries he had received from the murderers, a generous desire to deliver his country from the tyranny of these usurpers, and above all the express command of Apollo, with a promise of his protection if he obeyed, and a denunciation of the severest punishments should he dare to disobey; incited Orestes to this deed: he is accordingly drawn as a man of a brave and daring spirit, touched with the highest sense of honour, and the most religious reverence of the gods: in such a character there could be nothing savage and ferocious; and we are pleased to find him deeply sensible of the horror of the deed which he was obliged to perpetrate, and averse to plunge his sword into the breast of his mother. "Electra's character (in the words of the critic) is that of a fierce and determined, but withal of a

generous and virtuous woman. Her motives to revenge were, principally, a strong sense of justice, and superior affection for a father; not a rooted, unnatural aversion to a mother. She acted, as appears, not from the perturbation of a tumultuous revenge, but from a fixed abhorrence of wrong, and a virtuous sense of duty." Consistently with this character, when she had given Orestes a spirited account of their father's murder, which drew him to declare his resolution to revenge it, showing at the same time some sign of remorse, she adds a short relation of the barbarous indignities offered to the dead body; a deed of horror which she knew would shock his soul. She had seen her father murdered, his body mangled and buried without its honours; her brother, whom she loved with the tenderest affection, deprived of his throne, and exiled from his country; her mother in the arms of Ægisthus abandoning herself to her loose and infamous pleasures; she was herself continually exposed to the insults and barbarous treatment of this ungentle mother; what wonder then, that a spirit naturally lofty and sensible, should catch fire at these injuries, contract a wolfish fierceness, as she expresses it, and urge her brother to sacrifice these proud oppressors to justice and revenge? But the poet, with great regard to decorum, removes her from the scene before the dreadful deed is to be committed: with regard to his management of the catastrophe, nothing could be more judicious. Orestes, who had rushed on Ægisthus with the fury of a tiger, in the presence of his mother feels himself under the restraint of filial reverence, and confesses his reluctance to shed her blood; till Pylades animates him with a sentence as solemn as the Delphic Oracle; which finely marks the fatal blow as an act of necessary justice, not of ruffian violence. Even the Chorus, who enter warmly into the interests of Electra and Orestes, and had

fired him to revenge by every argument of duty, justice, law, and honour; who had wished to hear the dying groans of the guilty tyrants, and to echo them back in notes as dismal, after the deed is done, reassume the softer sentiments of humanity, and lament their fate. The remorse and madness of Orestes is touched in the finest manner. These indeed are but sketches, but they are the sketches of a great master: a succeeding poet had the skill to give them their finishing, and heightened them with the warmest glow of colouring. The spirit of Æschylus shines through this tragedy; but a certain softening of grief hangs over it, and gives it an air of solemn magnificence.

The scene of this tragedy, as of the former, is at Argos before the royal palace. Orestes, according to the custom of ancient times, offering his hair on the tomb of his father, sees a train of females advancing from the house, and *bringing libations to the tomb*; from whence the play receives its name. The action is afterwards removed to the area before the palace. This requires no change of scene.

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PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

ORESTES.

PYLADES.

ELECTRA.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

ÆGISTHUS.

SERVANTS.

CHORUS OF TROJAN DAMES

---

ORESTES, PYLADES.

ORESTES. O thou, that to the regions of the dead  
 Bearest thy father's high behests, O hear,  
 Hear, Mercury, thy supplicant, protect,  
 And save me; for I come, from exile come,

Revisiting my country!—Thou, dread shade,  
 At whose high tomb I bow, shade of my father,  
 Hear me, O hear! To thee these crisped locks,  
 Once sacred to the nurture-giving stream  
 Of Inachus, in th' anguish of my soul  
 I now devote.—But what are these, this train  
 Of females in the sable garb of woe  
 Decently habited? Whence spring their sorrows?  
 Does some new ruin lord it in the house?  
 Or haply, if I deem aright, they bring  
 Oblations to my father's shade, to soothe  
 The mighty dead. It must be so; for, see,  
 Electra is among them, my poor sister,  
 Pre-eminent in grief. Almighty Jove,  
 O give me to revenge my father's death,  
 And shield me with thy favour! Pylades,  
 Stand we apart concealed, that I may learn  
 What leads this train of suppliant females hither.

## CHORUS.

*Strophe 1.*

This sadly-pensive train to lead,  
 With hallowed rites to soothe the dead,  
 To bear these offerings to his shrine,  
 The melancholy task is mine.  
 And, as from yon proud walls I take my way,  
 My cheeks, with many a sounding blow  
 Beat by these hands, in crimson glow,  
 Whilst my poor heart to anguish sinks a prey:  
 And the fair texture of this vest,  
 That decent o'er my swelling bosom rolled,  
 My griefs through ev'ry waving fold  
 Have rent, and bared my bleeding breast.



*Antistrophe 1.*

For in the still and midnight hour,  
 When darkness aids his hideous power,  
 Affright, that breathes his vengeance deep,  
 Haunts with wild dreams the troubled sleep,  
 That freeze the blood, and raise the bristling hair :  
 Grim spectre! he with horrid tread  
 Stalked around the curtained bed,  
 And raised a yell that pierced the tortured ear.  
 Aghast the heaven-taught prophet stood ;  
 The dead, he cries, the angry dead around,  
 'These dreadful notes of vengeance sound,  
 Dreadful to those that shed their blood.

*Strophe 2.*

With soul-subduing fear appalled  
 Me this unholy woman called,  
 To bear these gifts, this train to lead,  
 And soothe to peace the mighty dead.  
 But will these gifts be grateful to his shade?  
 O Earth, when once the gushing blood  
 Hath on thy purple bosom flowed,  
 What grateful expiation shall be made?  
 Ill-fated house, thy master slain,  
 How are thy glories vanished! O'er thy walls  
 A joyless, sunless darkness falls,  
 And horror holds his hateful reign.

*Antistrophe 2.*

Round him the blaze of greatness shone,  
 And dignity adorned his throne :  
 The people bowed before their lord,  
 Awe-struck, and his high state adored.

Where now that reverend awe, that sacred dread  
 Of majesty? Success, to thee,  
 As to a god, men bend the knee.  
 But justice hastes t' avenge each impious deed;  
 Some in day's clear and open light,  
 Some in the dusky evening's twilight shade,  
 Or by delay more furious made,  
 Some in the dreary gloom of night.

*Epode.*

His blood, that sunk upon the ground  
 A stiffened mass of carnage lies,  
 Aloud for vengeance on his murderers cries:  
 Até obeys thy call; but slow  
 Delays, till dreary night enclose them round,  
 Prepared to strike a deeper blow.  
 Shall he, that foul with midnight rape  
 Pollutes the nuptial bed, escape?  
 Murder and lust! Were all the streams, that wind  
 Their mazy progress to the main,  
 To cleanse this odious stain in one combined,  
 The streams combined would flow in vain.  
 Me, from my bleeding country torn,  
 Condemned the servile yoke to bear,  
 Bitter constraint and spirit-sinking fear  
 Compel t' obey their proud commands;  
 Just, or unjust, perforce they must be borne;  
 Captive, my life is in their hands:  
 Perforce my struggling soul conceals its hate;  
 My vest forbids the starting tear to flow;  
 Mourning the mighty chief's unhappy fate  
 Silent I stand, and stiffen with my woe.  
 ELEC. Ye captive females, to whose care this house  
 Owes what it has of order, since with me

You here are present on these suppliant rites  
 Attendant, show, instruct me, as I pour  
 These solemn offerings on the tomb, what words  
 Of gracious potency shall I pronounce?  
 Or how invoke my father? Shall I say  
 "To her loved lord the loving wife hath sent  
 These presents?" Shame forbids: nor hath my tongue  
 Aught of address, whilst on my father's tomb  
 I offer these atonements. Should I rather,  
 As nature prompts, entreat him to return  
 Like garlands to the senders, meet reward  
 For their ill deeds? Or with inglorious silence,  
 For so he perished, on the thirsty earth  
 Pour these libations, then retire, like one  
 That in some worthless vessel throws away  
 Something unclean, and casts the vessel with it,  
 Nor backwards turns her eyes? Instruct me, friends,  
 Advise me, for alike we hate this house;  
 Be open then; here you have none to fear.  
 The free escapes not fate, more than the wretch  
 That trembles at his proud lord's tyrannous hand.  
 If thou hast aught of counsel, give it me.

CHOR. Since, as some hallowed shrine, thy father's tomb  
 I reverence, at thy bidding I will speak.

ELEC. I charge thee, by that reverence, freely speak.

CHOR. With these libations pour thy ardent vows  
 For blessings on the head of all his friends.

ELEC. Whom by that honoured title shall I name?

CHOR. Thyself the first, and all that hate Ægisthus.

ELEC. For thee and me then shall I pour these vows?

CHOR. To learn and weigh this well, be thy concern.

ELEC. Whom to this friendly number shall I add?

CHOR. Though distant far, remember poor Orestes.

ELEC. That's ill: I learn no little wisdom from thee.

CHOR. Remember next the authors of his death.

ELEC. What should I say? Instruct my lack of knowledge.

CHOR. Pray that some god, or man, may come to them.

ELEC. With what intent? To judge, or to avenge?

CHOR. Speak plainly, to repay them death for death.

ELEC. And may this be with reverence to the gods?

CHOR. What hinders to requite a foe with ill?

ELEC. [*at the tomb*] O thou, that to the realms beneath the earth

Guidest the dead, be present, Mercury,  
 And tell me that the powers, whose solemn sway  
 Extends o'er those dark regions, hear my vows ;  
 Tell me that o'er my father's house they roll  
 Their awful eyes, and o'er this earth, that bears  
 And fosters all, rich in their various fruits.  
 And thee, my father, pouring from this vase  
 Libations to thy shade, on thee I call,  
 O pity me, pity my dear Orestes,  
 That in this seat of kings our hands may hold  
 The golden reins of power : for now oppressed,  
 And harassed by a mother's cruel hand,  
 Who for Ægisthus, that contrived thy death,  
 Exchanged her royal lord, he wanders far,  
 And I am treated as a slave : Orestes  
 From his possessions exiled, they with pride  
 Wantonly revel in the wealth thy toils  
 Procured : O grant Orestes may return,  
 And fortune be his guide. Hear me, my father,  
 And grant me, more than e'er my mother knew,  
 The grace and blush of unstained modesty,  
 And a more holy hand ! For us these vows ;  
 But on our foes may thy avenger rise  
 Demanding blood for blood. These vows I breathe  
 In dreadful imprecations on their heads.

Be thou to us, my father, with the gods,  
 This earth, and pow'rful justice, be to us,  
 That breathe this vital air, a guide to good.  
 With these libations such the vows I offer.  
 Now let your sorrows flow : attune the pæan,  
 And soothe his shade with solemn harmony.

CHOR. Swell the warbling voice of woe,  
 Loudly let the measures flow ;  
 And ever and anon the sorrowing tear  
 Trickling dew the hallowed ground,  
 T' avert the ills we fear ;  
 Whilst on this sepulchral mound  
 Her pious hands the pure libation shed,  
 T' atone the mighty dead.  
 Hear me, O hear me, awful lord,  
 Through the dreary gloom adored !  
 Ha ! Who is this ? See, sisters, see,  
 Mark with what force he shakes his angry lance :  
 Comes he this ruined house to free ?  
 So does some Thracian chief advance ;  
 So Mars, when roused with war's alarms,  
 Radiant all his clashing arms,  
 Rears high his flaming falchion to the blow,  
 And thunders on the foe.

ELEC. 'Tis finished ; these libations to my father  
 The earth has drunk.—Thou awful power, that holdest  
 'Twixt this ethereal sky and the dark realms  
 Beneath dread intercourse : what may this mean ?  
 'Tis all amazement. Share this wonder with me.

CHOR. Say what : my throbbing heart has caught th'  
 alarm.

ELEC. Placed on the tomb behold these crisped locks.

CHOR. Shorn from a man, or some high-bosomed dame ?

ELEC. 'Tis no hard task to form a strong conjecture.

CHOR. Young though thou art, inform my riper age.

ELEC. None here, myself excepted, could devote  
His locks, the mournful off'ring ill becomes  
Our enemies. Then the colour; mark it well;  
'Tis the same shade.

CHOR. With whose? I burn to know.

ELEC. With mine: compare them: are they not much  
like?

CHOR. Are they a secret off'ring from Orestes?

ELEC. Mark: they are very like his clust'ring locks.

CHOR. I marvel how he dared to venture hither.

ELEC. Perchance he sent this honour to his father.

CHOR. Nor that less cause of sorrow, if his foot  
Must never press his native soil again.

ELEC. A flood of grief o'erwhelms me, and my heart  
Is pierced with anguish; from my eyes that view  
These locks, fast fall the ceaseless-streaming tears,  
Like wintry showers. To whom besides, that here  
Inhabits, could I think these locks belong?  
Could she, who slew him, offer on his tomb  
Her hair? Alas! her thoughts are impious all,  
Such as a daughter dares not name. I deem,  
With reason then I deem they graced the head  
Of my Orestes, dearest of mankind:  
Why should not I indulge the flatt'ring hope?  
Ah! had they but a voice, could they but speak,  
That I no more might fluctuate with these doubts  
Perplexed and troubled; could they plainly tell me  
If they were shorn from a foe's hated head,  
Or fondly mix their kindred griefs with mine,  
A grace and honour to my father's tomb!  
But to the gods, that know what furious storms  
Burst o'er me, like a shipwrecked mariner,  
I make appeal: if haply aught of safety

Remains, from this small root the vig'rous trunk  
 May spread its shelt'ring branches.—Further mark  
 Th' impression of these feet ; they show that two  
 Trod here ; himself perchance and his attendant ;  
 One of th' exact dimensions with my own.  
 But all is anguish and perplexity.

ORESTES, PYLADES, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

ORESTES. In other pressures beg the fav'ring gods  
 To hear thy vows, and shower their blessings on thee.

ELEC. What blessing from them have I now obtained ?

ORES. Thou seest before thee whom but late thine eyes  
 Most wished to see.

ELEC. And dost thou know the name,  
 Which with fond joy my tongue delights to utter ?

ORES. Thy fervent vows, I know, are for Orestes.

ELEC. And of those vows what have I yet obtained ?

ORES. I am Orestes : seek no firmer friend.

ELEC. With wily trains thou wouldst ensnare me, stranger.

ORES. Then should I spread these trains against myself.

ELEC. But thou wouldst mock me in my miseries.

ORES. To mock thy miseries were t' insult my own.

ELEC. Am I indeed conversing with Orestes ?

ORES. Thou seest me present, yet art slow to know me.  
 When offered on the tomb thou saw'st these locks,  
 When with thy own th' impressions of my feet  
 Were measured, joy gave wings to expectation,  
 And imaged me before thee. Mark these locks,  
 Shorn from thy brother's head ; observe them well,  
 Compare them with thy own. This tissue, view it,  
 The texture is thy own, the rich embroidery,  
 Thine are these figures, by thy curious hand  
 Imaged in gold.—Let not thy joy transport thee :  
 Our nearest friends are now our deadliest foes.

ELEC. Thou dearest pledge of this imperial house,  
 From thee my hopes, watered with tears, arose ;  
 Thy valour shall support our righteous cause,  
 And vindicate the glories of thy father.  
 Pride of my soul, for my fond tongue must speak,  
 The love my father shared, my mother shared,  
 Once shared, but justly now my soul abhors her,  
 And that poor victim, my unhappy sister,  
 Is centred all in thee : thou art my father,  
 My mother, sister, my support, my glory,  
 My only aid : and Heaven's great King shall prosper  
 Thy courage, and the justice of thy cause.

ORES. Look down, great King of Heaven, look down,  
 These deeds of baseness ; see an orphan race, [behold  
 Reft of the parent eagle, that, inwreathed  
 In the dire serpent's spiry volumes, perished.  
 They, unprotected, feel th' oppressive pangs  
 Of famine, yet too weak to wing their flight,  
 And, like their parent, fill their nest with prey.  
 We are the eagle's offspring, of our father  
 Deprived, and driven in exile from his house.  
 Before thy altars, loaded by his hand,  
 He bowed with pious reverence. Should thy will  
 Permit his young to perish, who shall pay thee  
 Like costly honours ? Should the eagle's offspring  
 Be doomed to perish, who shall bear thy thunders,  
 Dread sign of wrath awaked on mortal man ?  
 Nor will this empire, withered from its roots,  
 Adorn thy altars on the solemn day  
 With hallowed victims. Save us then, protect us,  
 To all its former glories raise this house,  
 Whose ruined towers seem bending to their fall.

CHOR. Ye generous offspring of this royal house,  
 And guardians of its honour, check your transports ;



Lest they are heard, and some incontinent tongue  
Bear them to our bad rulers : may these eyes  
First see the dark wreaths of their funeral piles.

ORES. The voice of Phœbus never shall deceive :  
In dreadful accents uttered from his shrine  
Aloud he charged me to defy the danger,  
Threatening to rack my soul with keenest tortures,  
Should I forbear t' avenge my father's death  
With equal retribution on his murderer,  
That proudly riots in my wasted wealth.  
This honoured shade he charged me to avenge,  
Though round enclosed with evils ; to the dead  
This triumph o'er their foes the voice declared  
A lenient joy ; to us denouncing ills,  
Corrosive leprosy with rankling tooth  
To gnaw our flesh, and taint our healthful bodies  
With ulcerous foulness, changing these fresh locks  
T' untimely white ; with trains of heavier woes  
Raised by the Furies from my father's blood,  
Who in the realms of night sees this, and bends  
His gloomy brows. For the dark shafts, that fly  
From those beneath slain by the kindred hand  
Of villain baseness, frenzy, and vain fear  
That trembles at the shadows of the night,  
Rouse, sting, and drive the vice-polluted wretch  
With brazen scourges tortured through the city.  
He from the friendly bowl, the hallowed goblet,  
The social intercourse, the incensed altar  
Is chased, condemned to bear the secret pangs  
Of inly-gnawing guilt : meanwhile the fiends,  
Hatred and infamy, pursue his steps,  
And drag him to an execrable death.  
Such was the voice of Phœbus, and demands  
My prompt obedience. Could my soul refuse

T' obey the awful mandate, yet the deed  
 Must be accomplished ; many urgencies  
 Conspire ; the charges of the gods, the grief  
 That wounds me for my father, the fierce pangs  
 Of penury compel me ; and the shame,  
 That burns the generous soul, to leave my country,  
 And all those heroes glorious through the world,  
 Whose conquering arms laid Troy's proud towers in dust,  
 Slaves to two women ; for his soul is woman :  
 If not, th' occasion soon will prove his spirit.

CHOR. And you, tremendous destinies, whose power  
 Is ratified by Jove, mark the firm course  
 Of justice, and by that direct th' event.  
 Be th' insults of the hostile tongue repaid  
 With hostile insults : justice calls aloud,  
 Demanding vengeance : let the murd'rous blow,  
 Requite the murd'rous blow. The solemn voice,  
 Requiring that oppressive force should feel  
 Oppressive force, is sanctified by age.

ORES. O thou much injured shade, my suffering father,  
 In thy dear cause what shall I say, what do,  
 Guided by fortune hither ? Where, O where  
 Is thy couch spread ? Our light is shaded o'er  
 With darkness deep as thine ; our youthful graces,  
 That in this royal house once bloomed with hope  
 Fair opening, shrink at the rough blast of sorrow.

CHOR. No : the devouring flames, my son, that waste  
 The body of the dead, touch not the soul ;  
 That lives, and knows its destined hour to show  
 Its wrath : yet for the dead our sorrows rise.  
 Meanwhile th' oppressor stands a signal mark ;  
 And the just griefs of fathers and of sons  
 With restless search trace all around for vengeance.

ELEC. Hear me too, O my father ; in those griefs

Which at thy sepulchre thy children pour,  
I have a mournful part. Thy tomb receives  
Alike the suppliant and the exile. Which,  
Ah, which of these is well? Which without evils?  
No lenient hand can ease our miseries.

CHOR. Yet may the god, that uttered from the shrine  
His awful voice, from these raise other sounds  
More pleasing; and for these sepulchral notes,  
Notes steeped in tears, through all these royal rooms  
The voice of joy may ring, and hail their lord  
Returned to bless them with his kind protection.

ELEC. Yet, O my father, hadst thou greatly fallen  
Beneath the walls of Troy, pierced by the spear  
Of some bold Lycian, leaving to thy house  
Thy glory, gracing with illustrious splendour  
Thy children's steps, on that barbaric coast  
The high-raised tomb had dignified thy dust,  
And soothed our sorrows. In the realms beneath,  
Thy friendly shade, amongst the friendly shades  
That fell with honour there, had held its state  
Majestic and revered, a king, next those  
Whose awful power those darksome realms obey.  
For to thy last of life thou wast a king,  
The golden reins of empire graced thy hands,  
And thy strong sceptre ruled a willing people.  
But in the fields of Troy thou didst not fall,  
Nor is thy tomb beside Scamander's stream  
With those that perished by the hostile spear.  
But, oh! I wish that they, by whom he fell,  
Had first so fall'n; and he, though distant far,  
Had heard the rumour of their bloody fate,  
Secure himself, nor tangled in their snares.

CHOR. Treasures of gold, my child, are poor to this:  
Thy words are greater than the greatest fortune,

And all her favours : from thy grief they spring.  
 But from this scourge a double clash is heard ;  
 One from th' assistant powers beneath the earth ;  
 One from those lords, those hated lords that rule us,  
 Whose rude, unhallowed hands are stained with blood :  
 This sounds most dreadful to this royal race.

ELEC. This, like a piercing arrow, wounds my soul.

CHOR. Supreme of gods, send from the realms of night  
 The slow-avenging Até ; bid her rise  
 To blast the fraudulent and audacious hands  
 Of impious mortals ; for a father's wrongs  
 She stamps her vengeance deep. When on this man  
 The vengeful sword shall fall, and bleeding nigh  
 Lies this bad woman, be it mine to hear  
 Their shrieks of death, and answer to their cries  
 In notes as dismal. Why should I conceal  
 My honest hopes ? Fate spreads her sable wings,  
 And hovers o'er their heads ; before their eyes  
 Stands indignation armed, and hate enraged,  
 Ready to rend their hearts, when Jove shall stretch  
 His puissant hands. O thou, whose power subdues  
 The mighty, to this country seal thy faith,  
 And ratify their doom ! On th' impious heads  
 I ask for vengeance. You, whose dreaded power  
 Th' infernal realms revere, ye Furies, hear me !  
 There is a law that, for each drop of blood  
 Shed on the earth, demands that blood be shed ;  
 For, from the slain, Erinnyes calls for slaughter,  
 On ruin heaping ruin. Ye dread powers  
 Of Hell's dark realms, where are you now ? Behold,  
 Ye potent curses of the slain, behold  
 The poor remains of this imperial house  
 Sunk in distress, and all its glories vanished !  
 Where, King of Heaven, where may we seek for refuge ?

ELEC. Again my throbbing heart sinks at the sound  
 Of thy laments ; and dark'ning o'er my soul  
 At thy sad voice comes anguish and despair.  
 But when thy words breathe courage, my sick griefs  
 Are fled, and fairer fortune seems to smile.  
 But with what words to woo her? Speak aloud  
 The miseries which we suffer from our parents?  
 Or smooth our tongues to glozing courtesy?  
 That softens not our miseries : and our spirits,  
 Roused by the wrongs of our ungentle mother,  
 Contract a wolfish fierceness. With bold hand  
 She struck the stroke, bold as the Cissian dame  
 Trained to the warrior's arms. She struck him once ;  
 Again she struck him ; her uplifted hands  
 Redoubled blow on blow ; swift on his head  
 The distant-sounding strokes with steep force fell.  
 Bold unrelenting woman, that could bear  
 Without one pitying sigh t' entomb the king  
 Unhonoured with his people's grief, the husband  
 Without a tear to grace his obsequies.

ORES. All thou hast mentioned are indignities  
 That swell my grief to rage. But vengeance arms  
 This hand, assisted by the gods, to punish  
 Th' ignominious wrongs done to my father.  
 May this revenge be mine, then let me die !

ELEC. When she had killed, with barbarous hands she  
 His manly figure, and with this abuse [mangled  
 Entombed him here, studious to make his murder  
 A deed of horror, that through all thy life  
 Might shock thy soul. Such was thy father's death,  
 Such were thy father's ignominious wrongs.  
 But me, a poor, deserted, worthless thing,  
 Spurned like a mischievous cur from my apartments,  
 They bid begone : there I could heave the sigh

In secret, there indulge the mournful pleasure  
 To pour the tear unnoticed, and unchecked.  
 Hear this, and on thy mind imprint it deep,  
 Engrave it on the tablet of thy heart ;  
 Be resolute, and calm. These things are thus :  
 Know this, and let thine indignation rise :  
 The time demands a firm, determined spirit.  
 And thou, my father, hear ; on thee I call,  
 And with a friendly voice, though choked with tears,  
 Hear us, and aid !

CHOR. And with a friendly voice this social train  
 To her sad voice accords the strain.  
 Hear, mighty shade, and from the realms of night  
 Revisit this ethereal light ;  
 Against thy foes impart thy aid,  
 Be war with war, and blood with blood repaid ;  
 Ye gods, with justice strike the blow !  
 I tremble as the measures flow ;  
 But fate attends, and hears our call,  
 And, stern the bloody forfeit to demand,  
 With fury arms the kindred hand,  
 And bids the righteous vengeance fall.  
 Here sorrow holds her dismal state,  
 Unsated murder stains the ground,  
 Revenge behind and terror wait,  
 And desolation stalks his round ;  
 Not with a distant foe the war to wage,  
 But on this house to pour their rage.  
 These are the strains, that to the gods below,  
 Th' avenging gods, in rude notes flow :  
 Hear us, dread powers ; and this imperial race,  
 Victorious in your might, with glory grace !  
 ORES. My royal father, who unroyally  
 Wast murdered, give me to command thy house !

ELEC. Hear me, my father, for I want thy aid ;  
 Grant me to share his vengeance on Ægisthus,  
 And then escape ; so may the solemn feast  
 Be spread to thee ; else when the grateful odours  
 Are wafted from the festive board, to grace  
 The mighty dead, thy shade must want its honours.  
 To thee this hand shall bring the costliest offerings,  
 To thee shall consecrate whate'er of wealth  
 Ought, from thy treasures, to adorn my nuptials ;  
 And with the holiest reverence grace thy tomb.

ORES. Earth, send my father to behold the combat !

ELEC. Inspire him, Proserpine, with glorious force !

ORES. Think on the bath where thou wast murdered,  
 father !

ELEC. Think on the net in which they murdered thee !

ORES. Toils, other than of brass, entangle thee.

ELEC. Th' inexplicable robe's accursed contrivance.

ORES. My father, cannot these dishonours raise thee ?

ELEC. Dost thou not raise thy honoured head ? O send  
 Justice to aid thy friends : or if thy soul  
 Sinks with its wrongs, nor rises to avenge them,  
 Be the like sufferings ours ! But, O my father,  
 Hear our last cries, and sitting on thy tomb  
 Behold thy children : pity my weak sex,  
 Pity his manly sorrow, nor extinguish  
 Th' illustrious line of Pelops : so in death  
 Thou dost not die : for children, when the tomb  
 Demands the parent, with surviving glory  
 Preserve his fame ; the corks that buoy the line,  
 And save the net from sinking to the bottom.  
 O hear us ; for thy sake we pour these plaints.  
 Thou shalt preserve thy glory, if with honour  
 Thou hear our words, our blameless words, that honour  
 The fortune of thy tomb, else unlamented !

Now, brother, since thy soul is roused to dare  
This deed, trust on the god, and do it straight.

ORES. I shall : but let me pause awhile to ask  
Wherefore she sent these off'rings, on what motive  
Thus late she soothes th' immedicable ill,  
Paying his wretched honour to the dead  
That cares not for it. What these presents mean  
Surpasses my conjecture, but her crime  
Outweighs their worth ; for all, that can be offered  
T' atone for one man's blood, is spent in vain.  
Yet, if you know, explain her motives to me.

CHOR. I know, for I was present : dreams and visions,  
The terrors of the night appalled her soul ;  
Her guilty fears urged her to send these off'rings.

ORES. Told she the dreams, that so alarmed her fears ?

CHOR. She fancied she had giv'n a dragon birth.

ORES. And what was the event ? Tell me in brief.

CHOR. This new-born dragon, like an infant child  
Laid in the cradle seemed in want of food ;  
And in her dream she held it to her breast.

ORES. Without a wound 'scaped she the hideous monster ?

CHOR. The milk he drew was mixed with clotted blood.

ORES. 'Tis not for nought this vision from her husband.

CHOR. She cried out in her sleep with the affright ;  
And many lamps, dim-gleaming the darkness,  
To do her pleasure entered the apartment.  
Soon to the tomb she sends these funeral honours,  
Medicinal, as she hopes to heal her ills.

ORES. But to this earth, and to my father's tomb  
I make my supplications, that in me  
Her dream may be accomplished ; and I judge  
It aptly corresponds : for as this serpent,  
Leaving the place that once was mine, and laid  
Swathed like an infant, seized that breast which nursed



My tender age, and mingled with the milk  
 Drew clotted blood ; and as with the affright  
 She called out in her sleep ; it cannot be,  
 But as she nursed this monster, she must die  
 A violent death ; and with a dragon's rage  
 This hand shall kill her, as her dream declares.  
 Or how wilt thou expound these prodigies ?

CHOR. Thus may it be. But now instruct thy friends  
 What each must singly do, and each not do.

ORES. Few words suffice : then mark me : let HER enter ;  
 And keep, I charge thee, keep my purpose secret :  
 That they, who slew an honourable man  
 By cursed deceit, may by deceit be caught  
 In the same snare, and perish ; so the god,  
 Powerful Apollo, from whose sacred voice  
 Nothing but truth can flow, admonished me.  
 I, like a stranger, harnessed in this coarse  
 And way-worn garb, with Pylades my friend,  
 Will as a guest and friend knock at the gate :  
 Our tongues shall imitate the rustic accent  
 Familiar to the mountain-race of Phocis.  
 Nor will the servants, 'tis a villanous house,  
 Receive us cheerfully ; but as we are,  
 There shall we stand ; while each that passes by,  
 With shrewd remarks shall shake his head, and say,  
 Why are these strangers thus inhospitably  
 Excluded from the gates, if their arrival  
 Ægisthus knows 'midst his domestic train ?  
 But if I pass the threshold of the gates,  
 And find him seated on my father's throne,  
 Or should he come t' accost me, be assured  
 Quick as the eye can glance, ere he can say  
 Whence is this stranger ? my impatient sword  
 Shall strike him dead. So shall the fell Erinnyes,

That with a horrid joy riots in slaughter,  
 Quaff this third bowl of blood.—Go then, Electra,  
 Be watchful : see that all things in the house  
 Be well disposed. And you, I charge you guard  
 Your tongues ; be silent where you ought, and where  
 Your voice can aid me, speak. The rest, my friend,  
 That guides my sword to vengeance, will o'ersee.

## CHORUS.

*Strophe* 1.

Pregnant with ills the dreary air  
 Gives sickness, pain, and terror birth :  
 The seas that wind around the earth,  
 Fatal to man their hideous monsters bear :  
 Each forest in its shaggy sides,  
 That darkens o'er the perilous ground,  
 The lurking, rav'nous savage hides,  
 Whilst fierce birds wheel the summits round :  
 And mark with what tempestuous rage  
 Black from the skies the rushing winds engage.

*Antistrophe* 1.

But who the dangerous thoughts can tell  
 That in man's daring bosom roll ;  
 Or whirl the more tempestuous soul  
 Of woman, when the tyrant passions swell ?  
 When love, to torment near allied,  
 Bids frenzy rule the troubled hour ?  
 Love, that exerts with wanton pride  
 O'er female hearts despotic power ;  
 And binds in his ungentle chain  
 Each savage of the wood, each monster of the main.

*Strophe 2.*

Think with what sullen frenzy fired  
 The Thestian dame with ruthless hand :  
 Cast on the hearth the fatal brand ;  
 The flames consumed it, and her son expired.  
 With horror think on Scylla's deed :  
 To win the favour of the foes,  
 The golden bracelets were the meed,  
 Against her father's life she rose,  
 Approached the sleeping monarch's bed,  
 And reft the sacred honours of his head.

*Antistrophe 2.*

Amongst these deeds of blood, that stain  
 The annals of the times of old,  
 Be that unhallowed couch enrolled,  
 Whose guilty loves this royal house profane.  
 Enrolled be all that female hate  
 Formed 'gainst the chief in arms renowned ;  
 The chief, whose glorious, awful state  
 Foes 'midst their rage with reverence owned :  
 Those glories, though they blaze no more,  
 Quenched by a woman's hand I still adore.

*Epode.*

In the black annals of far distant time  
 The Lesbian dames recorded stand ;  
 But the soul shudders at the crime,  
 And execrates the murders of their hand :  
 Basely at once the husbands bleed ;  
 Th' indignant gods abhor the deed.  
 And shall man dare with impious voice t' approve  
 Deeds that offend the powers above ?

Through the gored breast  
 With rage imprest  
 The sword of justice hews the dreadful wound ;  
 And haughty might  
 That mocks at right,  
 Like the vile dust is trampled on the ground.  
 Righteous are thy decrees, eternal king,  
 And from the roots of justice spring :  
 These shall strike deep, and flourish wide,  
 Whilst all that scorn them, perish in their pride.  
 Fate the portentous sword prepares,  
 And the rough labours of the anvil shares ;  
 Wide through the house a tide of blood  
 Flows where a former tide had flowed ;  
 Erinnys marks the destined hour,  
 Vengeful her meditated rage to pour.

ORES. What, does no servant hear me knock ? Within  
 Who waits ? Again I knock : does no one hear ?  
 A third time to the servants of this house  
 I call, if to the stranger at his gate  
 The great Ægisthus bears a courteous soul.

SER. Forbear ; I hear. Who art thou, and from whence ?

ORES. Go tell the lords of this fair house, to them  
 I come, charged with strange tidings ; haste ;  
 For now the sable chariot of the night  
 Rolls on apace ; and the dark hour exhorts  
 The way-spent traveller to repose beneath  
 The hospitable roof. Call forth the matron,  
 That has the charge of these domestic cares ;  
 More decent, if a man ; for modesty  
 There checks the falt'ring tongue, but to a man  
 More confident a man speaks free and open.

CLYTEMNESTRA, ORESTES, PYLADES, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

CLYTEMNESTRA. Speak, strangers, what your wants ;  
 here shall you find  
 All that becomes a house like this ; warm baths,  
 Refreshment of your toils, the well-spread couch  
 Inviting soft repose, and over all  
 An eye regarding justice. If your business  
 Be of more serious import, asking counsel,  
 The province this of men ; we will inform them.

ORES. A Phocian am I, from the town of Daulis.  
 Occasions of my own called me to Argos,  
 Nor asked a better dress, than this coarse garb  
 Familiar to me ; onwards as I travelled  
 I met a man unknown, myself to him  
 Unknown ; he courteous questioned me how far  
 I journeyed, and informed me of my way,  
 Strophius of Phocis, so I chanced to learn ;  
 Stranger, says he, since business of thy own  
 Leads thee to Argos, let me charge thy honour  
 To tell his parents that the young Orestes  
 Is dead. Forget it not. Whether his friends  
 With solemn obsequies will fetch him hence,  
 Or in eternal rest our friendly earth  
 Shall lay him in her hospitable bosom,  
 Bring back their pleasure ; for the brazen urn  
 Now holds the ashes of the honoured youth,  
 Whom we lament. This, faithful to my charge,  
 Have I delivered ; if to kindred ears,  
 And those, whose power is sovereign here, I know not.  
 But it is meet his parent knew th' event.

ELEC. Ah me ! Thus desolation on our head  
 Is fall'n. O thou relentless curse, whos' rage  
 Hung o'er this house, has thy unsparring eye

Marked what we lodged at distance, aiming there  
 Thy cruel shafts, to rob me of my friends?  
 E'en now Orestes, who with cautious tread  
 Had from this gulf of ruin freed his foot,  
 E'en he, the hope medicinal to the madness  
 Of this ill house, shows that our hope betrays us.

ORES. It were my wish to have borne other tidings,  
 More welcome to the lords of this fair mansion,  
 And meriting their hospitable favours :  
 For what more strongly to benevolence  
 Can bind the grateful soul ! Yet I should deem it  
 An impious wrong not to disclose even these,  
 Unwelcome, as they must be, to his friends,  
 So solemnly intrusted to my charge.

CLY. Not less for this shalt thou receive such usage  
 As thy worth challenges : not less for this  
 Respected here : another would have come  
 Charged with the same sad message. But the hour  
 Demands refreshment for the stranger, spent  
 With the long travel of the weary day.  
 Lead him to those apartments, where the men  
 Are well received ; let his attendant follow,  
 His fellow-traveller ; let thy diligent care,  
 I charge thee, minister to all his wants.  
 We to the rulers of this house will bear  
 These tidings, and amongst our friends consult  
 What measures in this sad event to form.

CHOR. [*alone*] Now, my dear partners, slaves to this proud  
 Now let us show our fortitude, now teach [house,  
 Our tongues a noble daring for Orestes.

. Thou hallowed earth, thou hallowed mound,  
 Whose high sepulchral round  
 Lies on the royal chief, that o'er the main  
 To glory led his martial train,

Now hear us, now impart your aid :  
 On this important hour,  
 Persuasion, try thy fraudulent power :  
 And thou, through night's surrounding shade,  
 Come, Mercury, from the shades below,  
 And when the falchion flames, direct th' avenging blow !

SERVANT, GILISSA, CHORUS.

SERVANT. This stranger, it should seem, brings mournful tidings ;

I see the tear steal from Gilissa's eye,  
 Nurse of Orestes. Wherefore dost thou pass  
 These doors? The sorrows that attend thy steps,  
 Shall here find no reward : expect it not.

GIL. My royal mistress ordered me with speed  
 To call Ægisthus to these stranger guests ;  
 That man from man he with more certainty  
 Might learn this fresh report. Before the servants  
 She kept her smile beneath a mournful eye,  
 To hide her joy at this event ; to her  
 A joy indeed, but to this house a tale  
 Of deep affliction. He too, when he hears  
 The narrative, will from his soul rejoice.  
 Ah me ! what sorrows in successive train  
 Have in this house of Atreus pierced my soul  
 From ancient times : but never have I suffered  
 A loss like this : with patience other ills,  
 Well as I might, I bore. But my Orestes  
 Was the dear object of my anxious thoughts ;  
 An infant I received him from his mother ;  
 I nursed him, many a night to all his wants,  
 To all his cries attentive, with a care  
 That now avails me not : ere reason dawns,  
 The nurse's care is needful ; in his cradle

The infant knows not to express his wants,  
 Rise they from thirst, or hunger, or the calls  
 Of nature : with fond diligence I marked  
 Th' instinctive cry, nor with a squeamish niceness  
 Thought scorn of any office ; for my love  
 Made all delightful. Now, unhappy me !  
 My dear Orestes is, I hear, no more.

But I am sent in haste to that vile man,  
 Whose rank pollution stains this noble house :  
 With pleasure this report will he receive.

CHOR. With what appointment does she bid him come ?

GIL. Appointment ! Let me comprehend thy meaning.

CHOR. If with his train of guards, or. unattended.

GIL. She bids him come attended with his guards.

CHOR. No, tell him not, this hated lord ; but wear  
 A face of cheerfulness ; and urge him hither  
 Alone, devoid of fear, to be informed.

For the mind catches from the messenger  
 A secret elevation, and bold swell.

GIL. This news, it seems, is welcome to thy soul.

CHOR. But what if Heaven's high King redress these ills ?

GIL. How ? With Orestes all our hopes are dead.

CHOR. Not all. This needs no prophet to unfold it.

GIL. Hast thou heard aught disproving this report ?

CHOR. Go, bear thy message ; do as thou art ordered ;  
 The gods, whose care this is, will guide th' event.

GIL. I go, in all observant of thy precepts,  
 May what is best come from the fav'ring gods !

CHORUS.

*Strophe.*

Now my righteous prayer approve,  
 Father and King of gods, Olympian Jove !



To thee may I unfold  
 Such vows, as from the modest and the wise  
 In the cause of justice rise.  
 Oh, may these eyes behold  
 Her power, adored by all, maintain  
 The glories of her awful reign !  
 Hear me, monarch of the sky,  
 Protect him with thy guardian care ;  
 O'er his foes exalt him high,  
 That lord it in the regal chair !  
 His ruined honours thus restored,  
 With fiercer rage thy vengeance shall be poured.

*Antistrophe.*

Yoked to affliction's iron car  
 This orphan son of a loved father spare :  
 Restrain its headlong force ;  
 And let the rapid wheels, with many a bound  
 Rolling o'er the rugged ground,  
 Here stop their painful course.  
 And you that guard this royal seat,  
 Its blazing wealth, its gorgeous state,  
 Hear, propitious gods, and save !  
 Let not the blood of former slain  
 Fresh returns of vengeance crave ;  
 No more these crimsoned mansions stain :  
 Slaughter no more from slaughter rise,  
 If low beneath the righteous sword he lies !

*Monostrophe.*

Thou, that hast fixed thy dreary reign  
 Deep in the yawning gulf below,  
 Yet let him rise, yet view this scene,  
 Around his gloomy eyeballs throw,

Distinct and clear the vengeance mark,  
 That threatens from her covert dark !  
 Thou, son of Maia, come, and with thee lead  
 Success, that crowns the daring deed :  
 To form the close and dark design,  
 Whether th' ambiguous tale thou lov'st to weave,  
 And throw around the veil of night ;  
 Or bid'st ev'n truth itself deceive,  
 Displayed in all the dazzling blaze of light ;  
 The powers of secrecy are thine.  
 Then shall this pensive female train  
     These rich oblations pay no more ;  
 No more the melancholy strain,  
     Tuned to the voice of anguish, pour.  
 Raptured their triumph shall I see,  
 My friends from ruffian danger free.  
 And thou, when thy stern part is come, be bold  
     Think how in blood thy father rolled :  
     And when, " my son, my son," she cries,  
 To melt thy manly mind with plaintive moan,  
     Then to her guilty soul recall  
     Thy murdered father's dying groan ;  
 And to his angry vengeance let her fall :  
     Like Perseus turn thy ruthless eyes ;  
 Just to thy friends above, thy friends below,  
     Aim with applauded rage the destined wound ;  
 Great in thy vengeance rush upon the foe,  
     And strike the murd'rer bleeding to the ground.

ÆGISTHUS, GILISSA, CHORUS.

ÆGISTHUS. This message has a voice, that calls me forth  
 To learn with more assurance this report,  
 By certain strangers brought, touching the death  
 Of young Orestes ; most unwelcome this ;

And the relation to this house will add  
 Fresh terror to the fear, whose unhealed wound  
 Smarts inwardly, and rankles. Should I give  
 Full credit to this tale, or rather deem it  
 The idle offspring of these women's fears,  
 That lightly rose, and will as lightly die?  
 Tell me, what proof gives credit to this rumour?

GIL. Indeed we heard it: but go in, examine  
 These strangers; less regard is due to rumour,  
 Than to clear information learnt from them.

ÆGIS. I wish to see this stranger, and to ask him  
 If he himself was present at his death,  
 Or only speaks from an obscure report.  
 Deception finds no easy entrance here.

CHOR. What should I say, eternal King,  
 Or how begin the strain?  
 These passions how contain,  
 That in my throbbing breast tumultuous spring?  
 O that, in aid, my daring deed  
 Might all the force of words exceed!  
 For now distained with blood the bick'ring sword  
 The contest ends; if all  
 This royal race shall fall;  
 Or the just laws their ancient state resuming,  
 And liberty her light reluming,  
 Hail to his father's rights the son restored.  
 'Gainst two fierce wolves the youth contesting stands  
 Alone: may heaven-sent conquest grace his hands!

ÆGIS. [*within*] Oh! I am slain.

CHOR. That groan! Again that groan!  
 Whence? What is done? Who rules the storm within?  
 The deed is finished: let us keep aloof,  
 And seem unconscious of these ills: best stand  
 At distance, whilst destruction ends her work.

SER. Woe, woe to me! Woe to my slaughtered lord!  
 Woe on my wretched head, and woe again!  
 Ægisthus is no more. But open here,  
 Ye females, instantly unbar these doors;  
 Th' occasion calls for vigour, not t' assist  
 The slain. Ho, here! What, call I to the deaf?  
 Or sleep you? Where is Clytemnestra? How  
 Employed? Her life stands at the sword's bare point,  
 And ready vengeance seems to prompt the blow.

CLYTEMNESTRA, SERVANT, CHORUS.

CLYTEMNESTRA. What means thy clamour? Whence  
 these shrieks of woe?

SER. They that were rumoured dead have slain the living.

CLY. Ah me! I understand thee, though thy words  
 Are dark; and we shall perish in the toils,  
 E'en as we spread them. Give me instantly  
 The slaught'ring axe; it shall be seen if yet  
 We know the way to conquer, or are conquered:  
 These daring measures have my wrongs enforced.

ORESTES, PYLADES, CLYTEMNESTRA, CHORUS.

ORESTES. Thee too I seek. He has his righteous meed.

CLY. Ah me! my dear Ægisthus, thou art dead.

ORES. And dost thou love the man? In the same tomb  
 Shalt thou be laid, nor ev'n in death forsake him.

CLY. Ah, stay thy hand, my son: my child, my child,  
 Revere this breast, on which thou oft hast slept,  
 And oft thy infant lips have pressed its milk.

ORES. What shall I do, my Pylades? Restrained  
 By filial reverence, dread to kill my mother?

PYL. Where then the other oracles of Phœbus,  
 Given from the Pythian shrine? The faithful vows,  
 The solemn adjurations, whither vanished?  
 Deem all the world thy foes, save the just gods.

ORES. Thou hast convinced me ; thy reproofs are just.  
Follow him : on his body will I slay thee.  
Alive thou heldst him dearer than my father ;  
Then sleep with him in death, since thou couldst love him,  
And hate the man who most deserved thy love.

CLY. I nursed thy youth, and wish to tend thy age.

ORES. What, shall my father's murd'rer dwell with me ?

CLY. The Fates, my son, the Fates decreed his death.

ORES. And the same Fates decree that thou shalt die.

CLY. Dost thou not dread a mother's curse, my son ?

ORES. That mother cast me out to want and misery.

CLY. Not so ; I sent thee to a friendly house.

ORES. Though nobly born, a slave, and doubly sold.

CLY. What in exchange, what price did I receive ?

ORES. I blush to charge thee with the guilty price.

CLY. Blush not ; but with it name thy father's lightness.

ORES. Sitting in wanton ease, blame not his toils.

CLY. Barred from our husbands, irksome are our hours.

ORES. Yet in your ease your husbands' toils support you.

CLY. My son, my son, thou wilt not kill thy mother !

ORES. Thy hand, not mine, is guilty of thy death.

CLY. Take heed ; avoid a mother's angry Furies.

ORES. Relaxing here, how shall I 'scape my father's ?

CLY. Methinks while yet alive before my tomb

I pour the funeral strain, that nought avails me.

ORES. Nought : for my father's fate ordains thy death.

CLY. Ah me ! I gave this dragon birth, I nursed him :  
'These terrors of the night were more than phantoms.

ORES. Foul and unnatural was thy murd'rous deed :  
Foul and unnatural be thy punishment.

CHOR. [*alone*] The double ruin ev'n of these awakes  
Our grief. But since his cruel fate has plunged  
Orestes deep in blood, pour we the prayer  
That his fair day set not in endless night.

*Strophe.*

Revenge at length is come, though slow her pace,  
 For Priam's ruined race.  
 In Agamemnon's royal hall,  
 Roused by the Pythian god's inspiring call,  
 The glorious exile stands ;  
 With lion port, with martial mien,  
 Such as the god of war is seen,  
 The sword of justice light'ning in his hands,  
 Fired by the prompting voice divine,  
 That thundered from the shrine,  
 Dauntless he dared these dangerous courts to tread.  
 Hark ! 'tis his voice : the walls around  
 His cheerful shouts resound :  
 No more the tyrants' malice shall he dread ;  
 The tyrants' lavish hands no more  
 Shall waste his treasured store ;  
 No more their pride usurp his throne,  
 Low in the dust their hostile pride o'erthrown.

*Antistrophe.*

With dark and secret fraud HIS coward mind  
 The bloody deed designed.  
 Revenge, with solemn steps and slow  
 Advancing, meditates the secret blow ;  
 Daughter of Heaven's high lord,  
 Though by the name of Justice known  
 Her sovereign power weak mortals own,  
 She guides his hand, she points his thund'ring sword ;  
 And rushing with impetuous might  
 Assists him in the fight,  
 Breathing destructive fury on his foes.  
 Nor less 'gainst HER whose treacherous hand  
 This injured house profaned,

From his deep shrine with fury Phœbus glows.  
 For ev'n the gods with sacred awe  
     Revere this righteous law,  
 To spurn the guilt that asks their aid :  
 And be this Heaven-commanding law obeyed.

*Epode.*

Cheerful the light begins to rise.  
 Sunk was our sun, and long in darkness lay,  
 Nor promised the return of day :  
 Soon may his beams revisit our sad eyes !  
 When these cleansed floors no more retain  
 Polluting murder's sanguine stain,  
 Time haply may behold his orient rays  
 O'er these illumined turrets blaze ;  
 And fortune, mounted on her golden seat,  
 Rejoice in our triumphant State,  
 Rejoice to see our glories rise,  
 And our unclouded sun flame o'er the sapphire skies.

## ORESTES, CHORUS.

ORESTES. Behold the proud oppressors of my country,  
 The murderers of my father, the destroyers  
 Of his imperial house : commanding awe  
 When seated on their thrones, retaining yet  
 Their loves, of their affection if with truth  
 Hence we conjecture aught, and their oath stands  
 Inviolate ; for to my father's death  
 They formed th' unhallowed compact, and to die  
 Together : these events confirm their oath.  
 Behold again, you that attentive mark  
 These ills, behold this artifice, the toils  
 That tangled hand and foot my suff'ring father.  
 This was his vestment ; form a ring around it,

Spread it, display it to th' all-seeing sun,  
 That with his awful eye he may behold  
 My mother's impious deeds, and in the hour  
 Of judgment be my witness that with justice  
 My vengeance fell on her. As for Ægisthus,  
 I reckon not of his death; a sacred law  
 He dared pollute; and justly has he paid  
 The dreadful penalty. She 'gainst her husband,  
 Once the dear object of her love, to which  
 Her swelling zone bore many a precious pledge,  
 Now flamed with ranc'rous hate, and murd'rous malice.  
 What noxious monster, what envenomed viper,  
 That poisons with a touch th' unwounded body,  
 E'er breathed such pestilent and baleful rage?  
 You view that vestment: tell me now, were all  
 The powers of language mine, what should I call it?  
 Toils planted for a savage? Or the bands  
 That for the tomb enwrap the dead? A curse  
 Well may you call it, and the gives of Hell.  
 Such may the pilferer wear, the thievish slave  
 That pillages his guests, and trains his life  
 To plunder; such the ruffian, whose rude hand  
 Prompted to murd'rous deeds is stained with blood.  
 Never, ye gods, may such a woman share  
 My bed: no, rather childless let me perish!

CITOR. O horror, horror! Dreadful were your deeds,  
 And dreadful is your death; the ling'ring vengeance  
 Burst with redoubled force. This was her deed,  
 Her cursed deed: this vestment is my witness,  
 Tinged by Ægisthus' sword; the gushing blood,  
 Now stiffened, stains its Tyrian-tinctured radiance.  
 Now I applaud his just revenge; now weep,  
 Viewing this bloody robe, and mourn these deeds,  
 The suff'rings of this house, and e'en this conquest,



Dreadful atonement ! Never shall the life  
Of mortal man be passed uncharged with ills :  
On some with rapid rage the tempest rolls ;  
Slowly on some the gath'ring clouds advance.

ORES. Be that another's care : I see the doom  
Assigned to me. For as the rapid car  
Whirled from the course by the impetuous steeds  
That scorn the reins, so my exulting heart  
Bounds with tumultuous and ungoverned passions.  
Yet let me plead, whilst reason holds its seat,  
Plead to my friends that in the cause of justice  
I slew my mother ; for her impious hands,  
Stained with my father's blood, called down revenge  
From the offended gods. And here I plead,  
To mitigate the deed, the Pythian prophet,  
Phœbus, whose voice pronounced me from the shrine,  
If I achieved the vengeance, free from guilt ;  
To my refusal dreadful was his threat  
Of punishments, beyond the reach of thought.  
Graced with this branch of olive, and this wreath,  
I will approach his shrine, his central throne,  
And his eternal fires, there to be cleansed  
From the pollution of this kindred blood :  
No other roof receives me ; so the god  
Enjoined. Meanwhile let Argos be informed,  
And all this people witness what a weight  
Of miseries oppressed me : dead or living,  
A vagrant, and an exile from my country,  
I leave these words behind me ; having done  
What honour gave in charge, I shall not blush  
Hearing my fame reviled, nor bear in absence  
The tongue of obloquy, the State of Argos  
Freed by this hand, that boldly crushed these dragons.  
Ha ! look, ye female captives, what are these

Vested in sable stoles, of Gorgon aspect,  
 Their starting locks tangled with knots of vipers !  
 I fly, I fly ; I cannot bear the sight.

CHOR. What phantoms, what unreal shadows thus  
 Distract thee? Victor in thy father's cause,  
 To him most dear, start not at fancied terrors.

ORES. These are no phantoms, no unreal shadows ;  
 I know them now ; my mother's angry Furies.

CHOR. The blood as yet is fresh upon thy hands,  
 And thence these terrors sink into thy soul.

ORES. Royal Apollo, how their numbers swell !  
 And the foul gore drops from their hideous eyes.

CHOR. Within are lavers. Soon as thou shalt reach  
 His shrine, Phœbus will free thee from these ills.

ORES. And see you nothing there? Look, look ! I see  
 them.

Distraction's in the sight ! I fly, fly !

CHOR. Blest may'st thou be : and may the god whose eye  
 Looks on thee, guard thee in these dreadful dangers !

Thrice on this royal house the bursting storm  
 Hath poured its rage in blood. Thyestes first  
 Mourned for his slaughtered sons. Th' imperial lord,  
 The leader of the martial hosts of Greece,  
 Next fell beneath the murd'ring sword, and stained  
 Th' ensanguined bath. Then came th' intrepid youth  
 Armed with the sword—of Freedom should I say,  
 Or Faté? How long shall vengeance pour her terrors?  
 When curb her fiery rage, and sleep in peace?

## THE FURIES.



IT is pleasant enough to observe with what heat the critics rise against this tragedy. C'est si bizarre.—L'unité de lieu n'est pas gardée dans cette pièce : mais ce n'est pas-là qui choque le plus.—Tota œconomia dramatis impia est et inepta.—Hic uno momento tota scenæ facies mutatur, et pro Delphis ac templo Apollinis Delphici habemus Athenas et templum Minervæ Athenis. Nihil ineptius aut inconcinnius excogitari posset.—The poet, it seems, had dared to violate the unities ; and further, has introduced personages of so extravagant a character as to baffle the skill of these literary martinets, and to whip them from their foining fence ; hinc illæ lachrymæ. Æschylus in all his other pieces that remain to us, has paid the strictest attention to these favourite unities ; and with reason ; he was their father, and knew their merit as well as any man : even here, where his management of the subject led him to treat them with less respect, he has softened the violation by a kind of magic power. Apollo and the Furies must be allowed the liberty to transport themselves whither and when they please : and Mercury has the charge of conducting Orestes ; so that had Horace wrote,

Ille per extentum funem mihi posse videtur  
Ire poëta, meum qui pectus inaniter angit,

Inritat, mulcet, falsis terroribus implet  
 Ut magus ; et modo me DELPHIS, modo ponit Athenis,

the allusion would have added a wonderful propriety to the expression, and the lines have conveyed a just character of this tragedy. However a French or a Dutch critic may be shocked at this change of scene, to an Athenian nothing could be more agreeable than to see a contest, which Apollo could not compose at Delphos, brought before the great council of his own city, the god in person attending and pleading in the cause. That respect to his country, which distinguishes our noble poet above all the writers of antiquity, has an irresistible charm. "Rules, art, decorum, all fall before it. It goes directly to the heart, and gains all purposes at once." The English reader feels this in its full force, and Æschylus is acquitted of the charge of having violated a unity. As these dreadful sisters were the ministers of the offended gods, to execute their vengeance on impious mortals stained with blood, just, impartial, and of resistless power, they were held in the highest reverence : as they were cruel, implacable, and delighted with their terrible office, they were detested, and abhorred by gods and men : this accounts for the very different treatment they here meet with. For the rest, let P. Brumoy be the poet's advocate. "On sent assez que les traits rude et un peu grossiers de cette pièce sont fort opposés à notre goût, et au vray goût du théâtre. Mais il ne faut pas confondre parmi ces traits, ce qui regarde uniquement les mœurs et les idées des Grecs. Le ronflement des Furies, et ce spectacle des monstres difformes, ne vaut du tout rien. Cependant, comme c'étoient des Divinités respectable pour les Grecs, ils les voyoient avec d'autre yeux que nous. A plus forte raison devoient-ils être moins choqués de voir Apollon plaider pour Oreste, et Minerve jouer le rôle qu'elle joue. Tout cela étoit dans leur genie ; et il est nécessaire

qu'on s'en rapproche autant qu'il est possible, pour ne pas trouver ridicule une tragédie qui ne l'étoit certainement pas au goût du peuple LE PLUS POLI DE L'UNIVERS."

Had these critics explained the motives which induced this venerable court to acquit Orestes, from the laws and usages of ancient times, they would have been better employed: but not a word of this. This curious inquiry was reserved for a writer of a very different genius; and the reader will thank me for referring him to the notes on the Epistle to the Pisos, v. 127.

This foul sisterhood on the Athenian stage amounted to fifty: the consternation arising from their hideous figures, and gestures, and yellings, had such fatal effects upon the children et les femmes enceintes, that the State by an express law reduced the number of the Chorus to fifteen, and afterwards to twelve. But the translator dares assure the English ladies, for whom he has too great a respect to offer them anything that can have the least tendency to hurt them, that they may read this play with the utmost safety. These ancient virgins are, to be sure, at first a little wayward, and rather outrageous; but they soften by degrees, till they become perfectly good-humoured, and the best company in the world. He flatters himself that he needs not make any apology for passing so slightly over ces ronflements redoublés des Furies, which are marked with great exactness in the original; nor for an omission of somewhat a similar nature in the last scene of the "Persians," He has taken the liberty to change the position of a few lines, where the Furies quit the temple of Apollo: which to him appeared necessary.

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## PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

THE PYTHIAN PRIESTESS.

APOLLO.

MINERVA.

THE GHOST OF CLYTEMNESTRA.

ORESTES.

CHORUS, THE FURIES.

---

SCENE, *the Vestibule of the Temple of the Pythian Apollo.*

## THE PRIESTESS.

WITH reverence first to th' Earth I pray these vows,  
 The first prophetic power : to Themis next,  
 Who next her mother held, they say, this seat  
 Oracular : Titanian Phœbe then,  
 She too the daughter of the Earth, unforced  
 Assumed this seat ; to Phœbus at his birth  
 Rich gifts, in honour of the day, she brought,  
 And graced him with her name ; the Delian rock,  
 The lake he left, and anchored in the port  
 Sacred to Pallas : thence to this fair region,  
 And high Parnassus, held his solemn march :  
 Attendant on his state the sons of Vulcan  
 With reverend awe prepare his way, and tame  
 The rude and savage earth ; the joyful people  
 Hail his arrival, and the sceptred Delphus,  
 Lord of this realm, adored the passing god :  
 With his own sacred skill high Jove inspired  
 His raptured soul, and placed him on his throne,  
 The fourth prophetic god, whence now he gives  
 His father's oracles : to these I raise  
 My first-breathed vows. Nor less Pronæan Pallas  
 Demands her meed of praise. Next I adore  
 The nymphs, that in Corycia's caverned rocks  
 Loved haunt of soaring birds, in rustic state  
 Have fixed their residence ; though Bacchus claims

The rude domain : my memory now recalls  
 With what a port he led his raging nymphs  
 To havoc, when devoted Pentheus fled  
 Affrighted, as a hare before his hunters.  
 The fountains next of Plistus, and the power  
 Of Neptune I invoke ; and lastly thee,  
 Supreme, all-perfect Jove ! These rites performed,  
 As priestess of the shrine I reassume  
 My sacred seat. Frequented as of old  
 Be this oracular fane ; and may the gods  
 Grant me auspicious answers : if from Greece  
 Th' inquirers, pleased return they with the Fates !  
 But my voice utters, what the god inspires.

*[She enters the Temple and returns affrighted.]*

Things horrible to tell, and horrible  
 To sight, have forced me from the fane again :  
 Trembling with fear my lax limbs ill support  
 My frame, save that my hands with eager grasp  
 Uphold my sinking weakness as I pass.  
 As to the shrine with many a garland crowned  
 I bend my age-enfeebled steps, beneath  
 The central dome I see a man abhorred  
 By the just gods, a suppliant it should seem,  
 For such his posture ; but his hands are stained  
 With blood, in one he holds a new-drawn sword,  
 High in the other crowned with ample wreaths  
 An olive branch, with wreaths of snowy wool  
 Handsomely wrought ; thus far I speak assured.  
 Before him lies a troop of hideous women  
 Stretched on the seats, and sleeping ; yet not women,  
 But Gorgons rather, nor the Gorgon form  
 Exactly representing, as I have seen them  
 Drawn by the painter's imitative pencil,  
 Snatching the viands from the board of Phineus.

These have not wings, but clothed in sable stoles,  
 Abhorred and execrable ; as they sleep  
 Hoarse in their hollow throats their harsh breath rattles,  
 And their galled eyes a rheumy gore distil.  
 Ill suit such loathsome weeds the hallowed fane  
 Graced with the forms of sculptured gods, ill suit  
 The roofs of men ; so foul a sisterhood  
 Till now I never saw, no land can boast  
 To have produced a breed so horrible,  
 But toils, and groans, and mischiefs must ensue.  
 But here Apollo reigns ; his awful power  
 Guards his own fane, auspicious to disclose  
 The dark decrees of fate, to spread the glow  
 Of vig'rous health, to breath th' ambrosial gales  
 And chase from other mansions all that hurts.

[*The Temple opens.—APOLLO is seen.—ORESTES as a suppliant.—The FURIES in a deep sleep.*]

APOL. No : I will not forsake thee : to the end  
 My guardian care shall favour and assist thee  
 Present, or distant far : but to thy foes  
 I know not mercy. See this grisly troop,  
 Sleep has oppressed them, and their baffled rage  
 Shall fail, grim-visaged hags, grown old  
 In loathed virginity : nor god, nor man  
 Approached their bed, nor savage of the wilds ;  
 For they were born for mischiefs, and their haunts  
 In dreary darkness 'midst the yawning gulfs  
 Of Tartarus beneath, by men abhorred,  
 And by th' Olympian gods. Fly then, nor yield  
 To weak distrust ; they, be thou sure, will follow  
 With unremitting chase thy flying steps  
 Wide wand'ring o'er the firm terrene, and o'er  
 The humid sea, and wave-surrounded towns.  
 But faint thou not, sink not beneath thy toils ;



Fly to the city of Minerva, take  
 Thy suppliant seat, with reverence in thy arms  
 Grasp her time-honoured image. Holding there  
 Concordant counsels, lenient of these ills,  
 We shall not want the means to heal thy pains,  
 And ratify thy peace : for at my bidding  
 Thy sword is purple with thy mother's blood.

ORES. 'Tis not unknown to thee, royal Apollo,  
 That I have done no deed of base injustice ;  
 This known, forsake not, slight not my just cause ;  
 Strong is thy power, and faithful to defend.

APOL. Remember ; let not fear unman thy mind.  
 And thou, my brother, by our ties of blood,  
 Our common parent, I adjure thee, Mercury,  
 Protect him ; rightly if the name of guide  
 Be thine, be thou his guide : defend my suppliant ;  
 For Jove with reverence looks on mortal man,  
 That awfully reveres our guiding power.

[*To the FURIES sleeping.*

#### THE GHOST OF CLYTEMNESTRA.

What, can you sleep? Is this a time to indulge  
 Your indolent repose? Through your neglect  
 I am dishonoured 'mongst the dead, reviled,  
 For that I slew him with incessant taunts,  
 And wander with disgrace : this infamy,  
 I tell you, is through you : my horrid sufferings,  
 From those most dear to me, excite no anger  
 Of one offended god ; yet I was slain  
 By my son's hand. With thy mind's eye behold  
 These wounds : in sleep the vig'rous soul, set free  
 From gross corporeal sense, with keener view  
 Looks through the fate of mortals, dimly seen  
 Through the day's troubled beam. Oft have ye tasted

My temperate off'rings mixed with fragrant honey,  
 Grateful libations : oft the hallowed feast  
 Around my hearth, at midnight's solemn hour,  
 When not a god shared in your rites ; but this,  
 All this I see disparaged now, and scorned ;  
 And he is fled, light as the bounding roe,  
 Burst from your nets, with many a bitter scoff.  
 Hear me, O hear ! 'tis for my soul's repose  
 I plead : rouse your keen sense, infernal powers,  
 'Tis Clytemnestra calls you in your dreams.  
 Deep is your sleep ; meanwhile he distant flies :  
 I ask your aid ; else not a suppliant comes  
 To interrupt your rest ; supine you lie  
 In dead repose, nor pity my afflictions ;  
 Meanwhile Orestes flies ; shall he escape,  
 The murderer of his mother ? Sound thy sleep,  
 And loud thy deep-drawn breath. Hast thou e'er done  
 Aught but fell deeds of mischief ? Rouse, awake ;  
 The terrors of the dragon lose their force,  
 Quenched in the dark profound of toil and sleep.

CHOR. [*asleep*] Seize him there, seize him, seize him,  
 take good heed.

CLY. In dreams dost thou pursue him, like the  
 hound

That opens in his sleep, on th' eager chase  
 Ev'n then intent. And is this all ? Awake,  
 Arise : let not thy toil subdue thee ; know  
 What loss ensues if sleep enfeebles thee ;  
 And let these just reproaches sting thy mind,  
 Incentives to the wise : with fiery breath,  
 That snuffs the scent of blood, pursue this son,  
 Follow him, blast him in the prosperous chase.

CHOR. [*awaking*] Awake, arise : rouse her as I rouse  
 thee.

Yet dost thou sleep? Leave thy repose; arise:  
Look we if this firm guard hath been in vain.

Ha, sisters, ha! 'tis base, 'tis foul;  
Vain is our labour, vain our care:  
This insult stings my tortured soul,  
Untaught contempt and wrong to bear.  
Whilst overpowered with sleep I lay,  
Burst from the net escapes the prey.

Great triumph, treach'rous son of Jove,  
In youth's fresh prime to mock my age!  
Thee could this impious suppliant move  
(And thou a god) whose cruel rage  
Plunged in his mother's breast his sword?  
Yet thou hast screened the wretch abhorred.

Clashing her scourge with hideous sound  
Reproach upon my slumbers stole;  
Deep in my heart impressed the wound,  
Ev'n yet chill horror shakes my soul.  
These are the deeds in misrule's hour  
When youthful gods usurp the power.

See all defiled with gore thy throne,  
There sate the murderer dropping blood.  
Yet these pollutions are thy own;  
From thee the call, the impulse flowed:  
Such grace, despised th' age-honoured Fates,  
Your new unhallowed shrines awaits.

And shall this wretch in safety breathe,  
Screened by thy power severe to me;  
No: let him fly the earth beneath,  
Never, he never shall be free:  
No: as he dared this murd'rous deed,  
Murder shall fall upon his head.

APOL. Hence, I command you, from my hallowed seat  
 Be gone with speed ; quit this oracular shrine :  
 This is no place to snatch your winged serpents,  
 And hurl them from your golden-twisted string,  
 To wing the black blood from the human heart  
 With torture, then disgorge your horrid feast  
 Of clotted gore : such guests my house abhors.  
 Begone where vengeance with terrific rage  
 Digs out the eyes, or from the mangled trunk  
 Remorseless rends the head ; to slaughters go,  
 Abortions, lurking ambush, rampired force,  
 To suff'rings, to impalements, where the wretch  
 Writhes on the stake in tortures, yelling loud,  
 With many a shriek : in feasts like these, ye hags  
 Abhorred, is your delight ; sufficient proof  
 That execrable form ; the desert wild,  
 Where the blood-rav'ning lion makes his den,  
 Such should inhabit ; nor with impure tread  
 Pollute these golden shrines : begone, and graze  
 Without a keeper ; for of such a herd  
 Th' indignant gods disdain to take the charge.

CHOR. Now, royal Phœbus, hear me speak : in this  
 Not an associate art thou, but alone  
 Thou didst this deed, and thine alone the blame.

APOL. Why this to me ? Inform me ; but be brief.

CHOR. Thy voice, pronounced from this oracular shrine,  
 Enjoined this wretch to shed his mother's blood.

APOL. Enjoined him to avenge his father's death.

CHOR. To this strange murder promised thy protec-  
 tion.

APOL. I charged him to seek refuge in this shrine.

CHOR. But these attendants thou with taunts insultest.

APOL. Unworthy they t' approach this sacred seat.

CHOR. Such was our charge : we come not uncommanded.

APOL. What is that honour? Make the glorious boast.

CHOR. To drive the murd'ers of their mothers hence.

APOL. What, fav'ring her, whose bold hand slew her husband?

CHOR. Nor should his hands be stained with kindred blood.

APOL. The sacred pledges of connubial Juno  
And Jove hast thou disparaged, set at nought;  
And Venus is disparaged by thy words.  
From whom the dearest joys, that sweeten life,  
Arise; for hallowed is the nuptial bed,  
Of deeper sanctity than oaths, and guarded  
By justice. If to those, whose mutual rage  
Bathes in each other's blood, thy chast'ning hand  
Is gentle; if thine eye looks milder on them,  
Nor flames with wrath; unjustly does thy vengeance  
Pursue Orestes; such I now behold  
Thy threat'ning mien, to others more benign.  
But Pallas, righteous queen, shall judge this cause.

CHOR. But never, never will I quit this man.

APOL. Pursue him then; to toil add fruitless toil.

CHOR. Think not thy words shall make my rage relent.

APOL. Shall thy rage touch him? No; I brook it not.

CHOR. At Jove's high throne thou art reputed great:  
Yet, since a mother's blood calls loud for vengeance,  
My keen pursuit shall trace him step by step.

APOL. To me his vows are paid; I will assist,  
And set him free; for dreadful were the wrath  
'Mongst gods and men, should I betray my suppliant.

CHOR. That moves not me.—These are his marks;  
observe them,

Unerring guides, though tongueless: follow, follow,  
And, like the hound that by the drops of blood  
Traces the wounded hind, let us pursue him.

*The Scene changes to the Temple of Minerva at Athens.*

ORESTES.

Hither, divine Minerva, by the mandate  
Of Phœbus am I come. Propitious power,  
Receive me by the Furies' torturing rage  
Pursued, no vile unhallowed wretch, nor stained  
With guilty blood, but worn with toil, and spent  
With many a painful step to other shrines,  
And in the paths of men. By land, by sea  
Wearied alike, obedient to the voice,  
The oracles of Phœbus, I approach  
Thy shrine, thy statue, goddess; here to fix  
My stand, till judgment shall decide my cause.

[*Here the FURIES enter.*

CHOR. These toils oppress me, as with breathless haste  
I urge the keen pursuit: o'er the long tract  
Of continent, and o'er th' extended ocean,  
Swift as the flying ship I hold my course,  
Though on no pennons borne.—There, there he stands,  
His speed outstripping mine. Have I then found thee?  
With joy I sniff the scent of human blood.  
Take heed, take heed; keep careful watch; nor let  
This murderer of his mother once more 'scape,  
By secret flight, your vengeance: trembling, weak,  
He hangs upon the image of the goddess,  
And wishes to be cleared of his base deeds.  
It may not be; no: when the fluent moisture  
Is sunk into the ground, 'tis lost for ever:  
Can then a mother's blood, spilt on the earth,  
Be from the earth recovered? No. Thy hour  
Of suffering is arrived, the hour that gives  
The purple stream, that warms thy heart, to quench  
My thirst, which burns to quaff thy blood, and bend  
To the dark realms below thy wasted limbs;

There, for thy mother's murder, shalt thou learn  
To taste of pain ; there see whatever mortal  
Dared an injurious deed, profaned the gods,  
Attacked with ruffian violence the stranger,  
Or raised his impious hand against a parent,  
Each with vindictive pains condemned to groan,  
His crimes requiting ; for beneath the earth  
The awful judge of mortals, Pluto sits,  
And with relentless justice marks their deeds.

ORES. Trained in affliction's rigid lore, I know  
Many ablutions : when to speak I know  
When to be silent : inspiration now,  
With heavenly wisdom prompts my tongue to plead.  
The faded blood is vanished from my hands,  
Nor from my mother's slaughter leaves a stain ;  
The recent crimson at Apollo's shrine  
Washed off with lavers pure, with offered victims  
Atoned. This honest prelude might be graced  
With many an argument : nor came I hither  
Consorted with a vile and impious band.  
All things with time grow old, and wear away.  
And now from hallowed lips my pious prayer  
Invokes the power presiding o'er this realm,  
Royal Minerva, that she haste to aid  
Her suppliant : so with voluntary zeal  
Myself, my country, all the Argive people,  
To her with justice I devote for ever.  
If in the coasts of Libya, on the banks  
Of Triton, native stream, she sets her foot  
Or bare, or buskined, prompt to aid her friends ;  
If o'er the plains of Phlegra, like a chief  
That marshals his bold troops, she darts her eye,  
Her presence I implore ; though distant far,  
The goddess hears ; to free me from these ills.

CHOR. No : not Apollo, nor Minerva's power  
 Shall set thee free, but that an abject outcast  
 Thou drag thy steps, seeking in vain to find  
 Rest to thy joyless soul, exhausted, worn,  
 A lifeless shadow. Yet thy pride replies not,  
 Me, and my threats despising, though to me  
 Devoted, my rich victim, and alive  
 To feed my rage, not offered on the altar.  
 Hear now the potent strain, that charms thee mine.

*Prosode.*

Quickly, sisters, stand around,  
 Raise your choral warblings high ;  
 Since, the guilty soul to wound,  
 Swells the horrid harmony.  
 Since to mortal man we show  
 How we give his fate to flow ;  
 Since our will his doom ordains,  
 Show that justice 'mongst us reigns.  
 He, whose hands from guilt are pure,  
 Stands in innocence secure ;  
 And from youth to honoured age  
 Fears not our vindictive rage.  
 To the wretch, that strives to hide  
 Ruffian hands with murder dyed,  
 Clothed in terrors we appear,  
 Unrelentingly severe ;  
 And, faithful to the injured dead,  
 Pour our vengeance on his head.

*Strophe 1.*

Hear me, dread parent, sable-vested Night,  
 O hear th' avenger of each impious deed ;



Whether we lie in shades concealed  
 Or to the eye of day revealed !  
 Seest thou how Phœbus robs me of my right  
 From my just rage the trembling victim freed,  
 Destined his mother's death t' atone,  
 And for her blood to shed his own !  
 O'er my victim raise the strain,  
 And let the dismal sound  
 His tortured bosom wound,  
 And to frenzy fire his brain.  
 Silent be the silver shell,  
 Whilst we chant the potent spell ;  
 Then yelling bid th' infernal descant roll,  
 To harrow up his soul.

*Antistrophe 1.*

Avenging Fate, as bending o'er the loom  
 She wove the web, to us this part assigned,  
 "Whoe'er the laws shall dare disdain,  
 And his rude hand with murder stain,  
 Pursue him, Furies, urge his rigorous doom,  
 Till refuge in the realms below he find."  
 Ev'n there not free ; my chastening power  
 Pursues him to that dreary shore.  
 O'er my victim raise the strain,  
 And let the dismal sound  
 His tortured bosom wound,  
 And to frenzy fire his brain.  
 Silent be the silver shell,  
 Whilst we chant the potent spell ;  
 Then yelling bid th' infernal descant roll,  
 To harrow up his soul.

*Strophe 2.*

This task assigned us at our natal hour,  
 Far from th' immortal gods our steps we bend :

Nor welcome at the social feast,  
 Nor honoured with a splendent vest ;  
 For mine I proudly claim the dreadful power  
 From its firm base the ruined house to rend,  
 When in calm peace its ruthless lord  
 Distains with a friend's blood his sword.  
 Him, though strong, we rush to seize ;  
 And for the new-poured blood  
 Demand his purple flood,  
 Glorying in the sacrifice ;  
 Duteous hastening to remove  
 Cares like these from angry Jove ;  
 And spare, whilst fierce for blood my vengeance flies,  
 The terrors of the skies.

*Antistrophe 2.*

His wrathful eye Heaven's mighty monarch rolls,  
 Awfully silent, on this blood-stained race.  
 But all the gorgeous blaze of power,  
 Which trembling mortals here adore,  
 When, mantled in these sable-shaded stoles,  
 With blood-besprinkled feet we urge the chase,  
 Since darkling to th' infernal shades,  
 And all its boasted glory fades.  
 Near him, as he flies, I bound,  
 And when, with guilt opprest,  
 His weary steps would rest,  
 Spurn him headlong to the ground.  
 Senseless, he, perchance, and blind,  
 Such the frenzy of his mind,  
 Such the deep gloom guilt spreads around his  
 walls,  
 He knows not that he falls.

*Epode.*

But shall sheltering wall or gloom  
 That from darkening guilt is spread,  
 Hide him from his rigorous doom,  
 Or protect his destined head?  
 Mine the vengeance to design,  
 And to stamp it deep is mine.  
 Sternly mindful of the crime,  
 Nor by man appeased, nor time,  
 When the wretch, whose deed unblest  
 Dares profane high Heaven's behest,  
 Though concealed from mortal eyes  
 Through the sunless darkness flies,  
 We pursue the rugged chase,  
 And his dubious footsteps trace.  
 Hear then, guilty mortals, hear,  
 And the righteous god revere ;  
 Hear the task to me assigned,  
 Fate the firm decree shall bind ;  
 Mine the prize of old ordained,  
 Never with dishonour stained,  
 Though my drear abode profound  
 Night and darkness cover round.

MINERVA, ORESTES, CHORUS,

MINERVA. It was a voice that called ; distant far  
 I heard it, where Scamander laves the fields  
 My ancient right : to me the Grecian chiefs  
 With voluntary zeal assigned this portion  
 Of their rich conquest, ever to be mine,  
 Selected as a gift to the brave race  
 Of Theseus. With a speed that equals wings  
 My vig'rous steeds thence whirled my car, the wind  
 Against my Ægis rustling as I passed.

But who are these consorted here? Mine eye  
Views them unterrified ; but much I marvel.  
What, and whence are you? To you all I speak,  
To him, the stranger, seated at my image,  
And you, whose hideous shape resembles nought  
Of mortal race, nor goddesses in Heaven  
Seen by the gods, nor like the human form.  
But the deformed to taunt with obloquy  
Is unbeseeing ; justice starts at it.

CHOR. Daughter of Jove, take our report in brief.  
We are the gloomy progeny of night,  
Called Furies in the drear abodes below.

MIN. I know your race, and aptly added titles.

CHOR. Soon shalt thou learn my honours, and my office.

MIN. Speak clearly then, without perplexing preface.

CHOR. 'Tis ours to drive the murderers from the house.

MIN. This all the vengeance to their guilt assigned?

CHOR. Where they shall never taste or peace or joy.

MIN. And does thy yelling voice thus drive HIM out?

CHOR. He dared to be the murderer of his mother.

MIN. Urged by the force of no necessity?

CHOR. What force could urge the wretch to kill his  
mother?

MIN. He hears but half, that hears one party only.

CHOR. He would refuse an oath, nor dares propose it.

MIN. Thy aim seems rather to obtain the fame  
Of justice, than to execute her laws.

CHOR. How so? Inform me ; thou art rich in wisdom.

MIN. Deeds of injustice are not cleared by oaths.

CHOR. Hear thou the cause, and judge with righteous  
justice.

MIN. Rests the decision of the cause on me?

CHOR. We reverence thee as worthiest 'midst the worthy.

MIN. Say, stranger, what canst thou reply to this?

Speak first thy race, thy country, thy misfortunes ;  
 Then urge thy plea against this accusation,  
 If trusting in the justice of thy cause,  
 Thus seated near my altar, thou embrace  
 With reverend hands, a suppliant as Ixion,  
 My statue. Be thy answer short and clear.

ORES. Royal Minerva, let me first remove  
 What thy last words, with much concern, suggest.  
 I am not stained with blood, nor shall my hand  
 Pollute thy statue : what I urge in proof  
 Bears strong conviction. Him, whose hands are red  
 With blood, the laws forbid to plead his cause,  
 Till with its flowing gore the new-slain victim  
 Has made atonement, and the cleansing wave  
 Restored his purity. In other shrines  
 Long since these hallowed rites have been performed  
 With offered victims and the fluent stream.  
 Blameless of this offence, I next declare  
 My race : an Argive : nor to thee unknown  
 My sire, the leader of the naval hosts,  
 The royal Agamemnon ; for with him  
 Thy conquering hand laid the proud walls of Troy  
 In dust : returning to his house he perished  
 By deeds of baseness ; for my dark-souled mother  
 With various trains in private murdered him ;  
 Th' ensanguined bath attested the foul deed.  
 I, then an exile, bending back my steps,  
 Slew her that gave me birth ; nor shall my tongue  
 Deny the deed ; it was a vengeance due.  
 To my loved father's shade : so Phœbus deemed,  
 Who urged me, and denounced heart-rending woes,  
 Should I shrink back refusing to avenge  
 The guilt : but if with justice, be thou judge.  
 To thy deciding voice my soul submits.

MIN. This is a cause of moment, and exceeds  
 The reach of mortal man : nor is it mine  
 To judge, when blood with eager rage excites  
 To vengeance. Thou with preparation meet  
 Hast to my shrine approached a suppliant pure,  
 Without offence ; and to my favoured city  
 Uncharged with blame I readily receive thee.  
 Let these, whose ruthless rage knows not the touch  
 Of pity, not succeeding in their plea,  
 Retire awhile, till judgment shall decide  
 The contest: from their breasts black poison flows,  
 And taints the sickening earth. Thus I pronounce  
 To each, unequal in this dubious strife  
 To give content to both. But since to me  
 Th' appeal is made, it shall be mine t' elect  
 Judges of blood, their faith confirmed by oath,  
 And ratify the everlasting law.  
 Prepare you for the trial, call your proofs,  
 Arrange your evidence, bring all that tends  
 To aid your cause : I from the holiest men  
 That grace my city will select to judge  
 This cause with justice ; men, whose sanctity  
 Abhors injustice, and reverses an oath.

CHORUS.

*Strophe 1.*

Confusion on these upstart laws !  
     Havoc with haughty stride  
 Shall march, and wave her banner wide,  
 If venial be this bloody caitiff's cause.  
     Impunity shall mortals lead  
         To every savage deed,  
 And prompt the son with rage unblest  
 To plant the dagger in the parents' breast.

I smile at all this lawless force ;  
 Nor shall our dreaded power  
 In vengeance visit impious mortals more :  
 No : let destruction take her destined course.

*Antistrophe 1.*

Whilst his own anguish one shall moan,  
 He hears his neighbour tell,  
 Appalled, of deeds as fierce, as fell ;  
 Tear falls to tear, and groan succeeds to groan.  
 Nor shall the rolling storm of woe  
 One gleam of comfort know.  
 When anguish rends the tortured breast,  
 Be not to us the mournful call address.  
 "Where is your throne, ye Furies; where  
 Justice," the father cries,  
 Or the pale mother, as in blood she lies :  
 But justice from her throne is exiled far.

*Strophe 2.*

Yet are there hours, when conscious fear  
 And the stern eye, that darts  
 Severely through their secret hearts,  
 With sober counsels check their mad career.  
 For when no ray of heavenly light  
 Breaks through the sullen night,  
 Dark deeds ensue; and virtue's power  
 By man, by State is reverenced no more.  
 Shall he, the wretch that scorns control,  
 And spurns each sacred law,  
 Or he that drags his chain with servile awe,  
 Feel the sweet peace that calms the virtuous soul?

*Antistrophe 2.*

Placed in the midst does strength reside,  
 With an indignant frown  
 On each extreme the gods look down ;  
 Injustice is the child of impious pride.  
 But all the joys, that life can know,  
 From tempered wisdom flow.  
 To justice chief thy soul incline,  
 And bow with reverence at her hallowed shrine.  
 Nor dare, allured by cursed gold,  
 With foot profane and bold  
 To spurn her altars : vengeance waits the crime,  
 And armed with terrors knows her destined time.

*Epode.*

Let each with awe profound  
 A parent's honoured name obey :  
 Each to thy milder voice, humanity,  
 Attentive homage pay,  
 When for the stranger thou art found  
 Pleading thy strains of pious potency.  
 He that to virtue's heavenly power  
 Unforced his willing soul shall bow,  
 Nor ruin's tyrant rage shall know,  
 Nor keen affliction's torturing hour.  
 But he, that dares her sacred laws despise,  
 Trampling on justice to amass his prey,  
 Appalled shall hear the rushing whirlwinds rise,  
 And tremble at the storms that swell the sea.  
 Wild with despair  
 He pours his prayer,  
 Whirled in the giddy tempest round ;  
 His blasted pride  
 The gods deride,  
 And all his daring hopes confound ;



Smile, as they view him racked with pain  
 Bound in misfortune's iron chain ;  
 As on the pointed rock they see him thrown,  
 To perish there unpitied and alone.

MINERVA, APOLLO, ORESTES, CHORUS.

*The JUDGES seated.*

MINERVA. Now, herald, let thy voice to all my people  
 Proclaim attention : sound the Tuscan trumpet,  
 That its ear-piercing notes may fill the city,  
 Commanding silence, and impressing awe  
 Due to this great assembly ; that the State  
 May learn my everlasting laws, and hear  
 The righteous judgment that decides this cause.

CHOR. Royal Apollo, where thy rule extends,  
 There lord it : but what right canst thou claim here ?

APOL. To give my evidence I come. This man  
 Is at my shrine a suppliant, at my shrine  
 He sojourns ; with ablutions pure I cleansed  
 His stains of blood ; and now shall plead his cause,  
 Our common cause, since for his mother's death  
 Your accusations reach e'en me ; but thou  
 Urge, as thou canst, thy plea : open the charge.

MIN. This is incumbent on you ; open then  
 The charge : th' accuser's voice must first explain  
 Clearly through every circumstance the cause.

CHOR. Though we are many, brief shall be our words.  
 Now answer me in order, word for word.

My first demand is, Didst thou kill thy mother ?

ORES. I did ; and never shall deny the deed.

CHOR. First of the three this is one signal foil.

ORES. Unmoved I stand, and thy proud vaunts are vain.

CHOR. Declare it then at once, How didst thou kill her ?

ORES. I drew my sword, and plunged it in her breast.

CHOR. At whose persuasion ? or by whose advice ?

ORES. By HIS oracular voice : he will attest it.

CHOR. The Prophet urge thee to this bloody deed !

ORES. Nor thus far have I to accuse my fate.

CHOR. Far other language the condemning vote  
Will teach thy tongue.

ORES. My confidence is firm ;  
My father from the tomb will send me aid.

CHOR. Confiding in the dead he slew his mother.

ORES. Her breast was spotted with a double stain.

CHOR. What may this mean ? Speak, and inform thy  
judges.

ORES. She slew my father when she slew her husband.

CHOR. And yet thou livest : from that stain she's free.

ORES. Why, whilst she lived, didst thou not drive her  
out ?

CHOR. She had no kindred blood with him she slew.

ORES. Is mine allied then to my mother's blood ?

CHOR. How else, before thy birth, did she sustain,  
How nourish thee ? The murd'rous wretch disowns  
That dearest of all ties, a mother's blood.

ORES. Now let me call thy testimony ; now  
Declare, Apollo, if I slew her justly :  
For that I slew her, in such circumstance,  
I not deny : if rightfully or not,  
Decide, that I to these may plead thy sanction.

APOL. To you, the great and reverend council here  
Placed by Minerva, will I speak and truly ;  
For never shall the god of prophecy  
Pronounce a falsehood ; never have I uttered  
From my oracular seat to man, to woman,  
Or State, save what the great Olympian sire  
Shall have commanded. Of his sovereign justice  
Learn you the force, and bow to his high will :  
Nor deem an oath of greater power than Jove.

CHOR. This oracle, thou say'st, was dictated

By Jove, to charge Orestes, whilst his hand  
Was armed with vengeance for his father's murder,  
To pay no reverence to his mother's blood.

APOL. Of higher import is it, when a man  
Illustrious for his virtues, by the gods  
Exalted to the regal throne, shall die,  
Die by a woman's hand, by one that dares not  
Bend, like an Amazon, the stubborn bow.  
But hear me, Pallas, hear me, you that sit  
In awful judgment to decide this cause.  
Victorious from the war, with glory crowned,  
And graced with many a trophy, at the bath  
She smilingly received him ; there refreshed,  
As o'er his head he threw the splendid robe  
Prepared t' entangle him, she slew her husband.  
So died the chief, the glorious, the renowned,  
The leader of the warlike troops of Greece :  
And such I speak this woman, reverend judges,  
To strike your souls with horror at her deeds.

CHOR. So Jove, it seems, respects the father's fate ;  
Yet on his father he could bind the chain,  
The hoary Saturn : that his deed gainsays  
Thy words : I pray you mark the poor evasion.

APOL. Detested hags, th' abhorrence of the gods !  
He could unbind these chains, and the release  
Has a medicinal power. But when the blood,  
That issues from the slain, sinks in the dust  
It never rises more. For this my sire  
No remedy admits, in all besides  
With sovereign power or ruins or restores.

CHOR. See with what ill-judged zeal thy arguments  
Labour t' absolve him ! Shall the wretch, whose hand  
Spilt on the earth the kindred blood that flowed  
Within his mother's veins, return to Argos  
Lord of his father's house ? Before what altar,

Sacred to public offerings, shall he bend?  
 What friendly laver shall admit his hands?

APOL. This too shall I explain; and mark me well,  
 If reason guides my words. The mother's power  
 Produces not the offspring, ill called hers.

No: 'tis the father, that to her commits  
 The infant plant; she but the nutrient soil  
 That gives the stranger growth, if fav'ring Heaven  
 Denies it not to flourish: this I urge

In proof, a father may assert that name  
 Without a mother's aid; an instance sits  
 Minerva, daughter of Olympian Jove;  
 Not the slow produce of nine darkling months,

But formed at once in all her perfect bloom:  
 Such from no pregnant goddess ever sprung.

Thy State, thy people, Pallas, be it mine  
 T' exalt to glory, and what else of greatness  
 I know to give. This suppliant to thy shrine  
 I sent, assuring his eternal faith;

'Thy votary he, and his descendants thine,  
 From sire to son through all succeeding ages.

MIN. The pleas are urged: these now I charge to give  
 Sentence, with strict regard to truth and justice.

CHOR. We have discharged our shafts: and now I wait  
 To hear what sentence shall adjudge this cause.

MIN. What, am I never to escape your censure?

CHOR. Give what you've heard due weight; and with  
 pure hearts

Pronouncing sentence reverence your high oath.

MIN. Ye citizens of Athens, now attend,  
 Whilst this great council in a cause of blood  
 First give their judgment. But through future ages  
 This awful court shall to the hosts of Ægeus  
 With uncorrupted sanctity remain.

Here on this Mount of Mars the Amazons

Of old encamped, when their embattled troops  
Marched against Theseus, and in glittering arms  
Breathed vengeance ; here their new-aspiring towers  
Raised high their rampired heads to storm his towers,  
And here their hallowed altars rose to Mars :  
Hence its illustrious name the cliff retains,  
The Mount of Mars. In this the solemn state  
Of this majestic city, and the awe  
That rises thence shall be a holy guard  
Against injustice, shall protect the laws  
Pure and unsullied from th' oppressive power  
Of innovation, and th' adulterate stain  
Of foreign mixture : should thy hand pollute  
The liquid fount with mud, where wilt thou find  
The grateful draught ? Let not my citizens  
Riot in lawless anarchy, nor wear  
The chain of tyrant power, nor from their state  
Loose all the curb of rigour : this removed,  
What mortal man, unchecked with sense of fear,  
Would reverence justice ? Let the majesty,  
That here resides, impress your souls with awe :  
Your country has a fence, your town a guard,  
Such as no nation knows ; not those that dwell  
In Scythia, or the cultured realms of Pelops,  
This court superior to th' alluring glare  
Of pestilent gold, this court that claims your awe  
Severely just, I constitute your guard,  
Watchful to shield your country and its peace :  
These my commands to every future age  
Have I extended. Now behoves you, judges,  
Give test of your integrity ; bring forth  
The shells ; with strictest justice give your suffrage,  
And reverence your high oath. This is my charge.

CHOR. Nor of their honours rob this train, whose power  
Is dreadful in the drear abodes below.

APOL. And be my oracles, the voice of Jove,  
Revered, nor seek to move their firm decree.

CHOR. Beyond thy charge protecting deeds of blood,  
Nor reverend are thy oracles, nor pure.

APOL. Think of the expiation, which of old  
Ixion made for blood : wilt thou arraign  
My father's councils there ? Or slept his wisdom ?

CHOR. Thou say'st it ; but if justice fails me here,  
This land shall feel the terrors of my vengeance.

APOL. Unhonoured thou by every power of Heaven,  
Or young, or old, to triumph here is mine.

CHOR. Such in the house of Pheres were thy deeds,  
When, won by thy alluring voice, the Fates  
On mortal man conferred immortal honours.

APOL. To aid, to grace the pious, when their prayers  
Rightly invoke our influence, is just.

CHOR. What, hast thou crushed the power of ancient  
And wouldst thou now delude our honoured age ? [Fate,

APOL. Soon shall thy malice, baffled in this cause,  
Shed its black venom harmless to thy foes.

CHOR. Since thy proud youth insults my hoary years,  
I wait th' event in silence, and suspend  
The fury of my vengeance on this city.

MIN. Last to give suffrage in this cause is mine :  
In favour of Orestes shall I add  
My vote : for as no mother gave me birth,  
My grace in all things, save the nuptial rites,  
Attends the male, as from my sire I drew  
The vigour of my soul. No woman's fate  
Stained with her husband's blood, whom nature formed  
Lord of his house, finds partial preference here.  
Orestes, if the number of the votes  
Be equal, is absolved. Now from the urn  
I et those among the judges, to whose honour  
This office is assigned, draw forth the lots.

ORES. O Phœbus, what th' event that waits this cause !

CHOR. O Night, dark mother, through thy sable gloom  
Seest thou these things? Now on the doubtful edge  
Of black despair I stand, or joyful light,  
Driven out with infamy, or graced with honours.

APOL. Now, strangers, count the lots with righteous  
heed,  
And with impartial justice sever them.  
One shell misplaced haply brings ruin, one  
May raise again a desolated house.

MIN. He is absolved, free from the doom of blood,  
For equal are the numbers of the shells.

ORES. O thou, whose tutelary power preserved  
The honours of my house, thou, goddess, thou  
Hast to his country and his native rites  
Restored this exile ; and each Greek shall say,  
This Argive to his father's throne returns,  
So Pallas wills, and Phœbus, and the god  
All-powerful to protect ; my father's death  
He marked severe, and looks indignant down  
On those that patronize my mother's cause.  
First to this country, and to this thy people  
Through time's eternal course I pledge my faith,  
And bind it with an oath : now to my house  
I bend my steps : never may chieftain thence  
Advance against this land with ported spear.  
If any shall hereafter violate  
My oath now made, though then these mouldering bones  
Rest in the silent tomb, my shade shall raise  
Invincible distress, disasters, toils,  
To thwart them, and obstruct their lawless march,  
Till in dismay repentant they abhor  
Their enterprise. But to the social powers,  
That reverence this thy State, and lift the lance  
In its defence, benevolent shall be

My gentler influence. Hail, goddess ; hail,  
 Ye guardians of the city ; be your walls  
 Impregnable, and in the shock of war  
 May conquest grace the spear that aids your cause !

CHOR. I burst with rage. With cruel pride  
 These youthful gods my slighted age deride.  
 And, the old laws disdaining to obey,  
 Rend from my hands my prey.  
 Tortured with grief's corroding smart,  
 And taught disgrace and scorn to know,  
 Distilling from my anguished heart  
 The pestilential drop shall flow ;  
 Where'er it falls, nor fruit around,  
 Nor leaf shall grace the blasted ground ;  
 Through the sick air its baleful dews  
 A caustic venom shall diffuse ;  
 And breathing on this hateful race  
 With deep rough scars the beauteous form deface.  
 Vainly shall I heave my sighs,  
 Or bid my angry vengeance rise ?  
 To insults, which my bosom rend,  
 Vulgar spirits scorn to bend,  
 And shall thy daughters, awful Night, in vain  
 Of their disgrace complain ?

MIN. Let my entreaties move you ; bear not this  
 With such deep anger ; for no conquest here  
 Wounds your insulted honour : from the urn  
 The lots came equal, so disposed by truth,  
 To thee no insult off'ring, and from Jove  
 Flowed splendid signs ; he gave the oracle,  
 He added his high test, that for the deed  
 Orestes should not suffer. Breathe not then  
 Your heavy vengeance on this land ; restrain  
 Your indignation ; o'er these sickening fields  
 Drop not your pestilential dews, nor blast



Their glittering verdure, and their springing seeds.  
 And here I pledge my faith, this grateful land  
 Shall willingly receive you, raise your seats  
 High at their blazing hearths, and, with deep awe  
 Imprest, pay reverend honours to your power.

CHOR. I burst with rage. With cruel pride  
 These youthful gods my slighted age deride ;  
 And, the old laws disdaining to obey,  
 Rend from my hands my prey.  
 Tortured with grief's corroding smart,  
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 Distilling from my anguished heart  
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 With deep rough scars the beauteous form deface.  
 Vainly shall I heave my sighs,  
 Or bid my angry vengeance rise ?  
 To insults, which my bosom rend,  
 Vulgar spirits scorn to bend ;  
 And shall thy daughters, awful Night, in vain  
 Of their disgrace complain ?

MIN. No, you are not disgraced ; not let your wrath,  
 Immortal as you are, to mortal man  
 Spread desolation o'er the earth. I too  
 Prevail with Jove. And wherefore should I say  
 Of all the gods I only know the keys  
 That ope those solid doors, within whose vaults  
 His thunders sleep ? Of these there is no need.  
 By me persuaded let thy hasty tongue  
 Forbear those threats, from which no fruit can flow,  
 But ruin to the earth : compose that rage,

Whose swelling tide o'erflows all bounds, with me  
 In the same mansion, and with equal honours  
 Revered, enjoying through these ample realms  
 The prime oblations, victims doomed to bleed  
 For blessings on the birth, or nuptial hour,  
 That thou shall thank me for this friendly counsel.

CHOR. Shall I brook this? Shall I then deign  
 In this cursed land to spend my slighted age,  
 And my lost honours mourn in vain?  
 No: be each vengeful thought inflamed with rage:  
 Ah me, the keen, the madd'ning smart!  
 Deep, deep it cuts, it rends my heart.  
 Hear, awful Night, my raving passion hear!  
 These gods, with a malignant smile,  
 Ah me! my baffled power beguile,  
 And from my brows the public honours tear.

MIN. Thine anger will I bear with, for thy years  
 Are more than mine, thy wisdom more; though Jove  
 Hath with no niggard grace on me bestowed  
 A prudent sense. You yet are strangers here;  
 But I foresee, when once your seats are fixed,  
 These scenes will be delightful, and the flow  
 Of future years to the inhabitants  
 Roll more abundant honours. Where Erechtheus  
 Raised high his regal structures, thou shalt hold  
 Thy residence, receiving from the men,  
 And from the train of females, such high honours  
 As mortals never paid thee. Cast not then  
 On these my realms the pestilent bane, that fires  
 Beyond the rage of wine the frantic youth  
 To wild ensanguined slaughter: in their hearts  
 Pour not the fury of the crested cock  
 Exciting discord, broils, and civil war.  
 To foreign wars, when dangers threaten nigh,  
 Let glory lead their arms: domestic strife

Is hateful to my soul : bethink thee well,  
 Thou hast thy choice, by courtesy to win  
 Returns of courtesy, and reverenced high  
 To share this country grateful to the gods.

CHOR. Shall I brook this? Shall I then deign  
 In this cursed land to spend my slighted age,  
 And my lost honours mourn in vain?  
 No : be each vengeful thought inflamed with rage.  
 Ah me, the keen, the madd'ning smart !  
 Deep, deep it cuts, it rends my heart.  
 Hear, awful Night, my raving passion hear !  
 These gods, with a malignant smile,  
 Ah me ! my baffled power beguile,  
 And from my brows the public honours tear.

MIN. I will not yet surcease to speak thee fair ;  
 And never with just cause shalt thou complain  
 That with inhospitable pride my youth,  
 And the rude race of mortals dwelling here,  
 Drove thee, an ancient goddess, with disgrace  
 An outcast from this land. If yet the power  
 Of mild persuasion, dropping from my lips  
 In words of sweet and soothing courtesy,  
 Hath not lost all its virtue, thou wilt stay :  
 If thou disdain to stay, yet not with justice  
 Canst thou with wrath or vengeance load this town,  
 Nor on its people shed thy baneful dews.  
 'Tis in thy choice to bless this land, and fix  
 With everlasting honours here thy seat.

CHOR. What seat, say, royal virgin, shall be mine ?

MIN. Where misery never comes. Assent, accept it.

CHOR. I do assent. What honour now awaits me ?

MIN. That, without thee, no house shall rise to glory.

CHOR. Wilt thou do this, advance my honour thus ?

MIN. Him that reveres thee, shall my power protect.

CHOR. And shall thy word stand unimpaired by time ?

MIN. It is not mine to violate my faith.

CHOR. Thy words have almost soothed me to a calm,  
And the high storm of anger dies away.

MIN. The charms of friendship here shalt thou enjoy.

CHOR. Say, with what strains shall I salute this land ?

MIN. Such as, allied to conquest, from the earth,  
From the rich dews of ocean, from the sky  
Soft-tempered with the genial sun, may wake  
Ambrosial gales diffusing o'er this earth  
Luxuriance to its fruits, and to its flocks  
Prolific vigour, to its peopled towns  
Th' unfading glow of health. Be this thy charge ;  
Mine, in the glorious toils of war to grace  
Their fame-ennobled arms with victory.

CHOR. Goddess, here thy seat I share,  
Hostile to this town no more ;  
Which the dreadful god of war,  
And the Thund'rer's sovereign power,  
Give the pride of Greece to rise  
Guardian of the rites divine,  
Glory of the fav'ring skies,  
Give to watch o'er freedom's shrine.

I too breathe the potent prayer :  
May the sun's ambrosial ray,  
Rolling o'er the fruitful year,  
All its richest charms display !

MIN. For my loved city with a willing mind  
This do I, seating here these awful powers  
That yield with much reluctance ; for o'er man  
The Fates assign them a despotic sway.  
And he, that feels their terrors, often knows not  
Whence springs the vengeful wrath, whose iron scourge  
Imbitters life : for the sire's long-passed crimes  
Draw to their chast'ning hand the suff'ring sou ;

And 'midst his thoughts of greatness, silent ruin  
With ruthless hate pursues, and crushes him.

CHOR. O'er their saplings spreading fair  
May no chill wind noxious blow ;  
Nor the dry and scorching air  
Singe their fresh buds' opening glow.

For my sake may no disease  
Sicken o'er the blasted year :  
May their teeming flocks increase,  
And a double offspring bear.

'Gainst the solemn festal day  
Numerous may their herds arise ;  
Sportive o'er the rich fields play,  
Gift of the propitious skies.

MIN. Hear this, ye guardians of the State, and know  
Her word shall be accomplished ; for the gods  
That tread the spangled skies, and those that hold  
In the dark realms beneath their solemn thrones,  
Revere her awful power ; and her high strains  
To mortal man in accents dread pronounce  
Blessings to some, to some a life of woes.

CHOR. May no harsh untimely doom  
Sweep the manly youth away ;  
May the virgins' ripening bloom  
Crown with love the bridal day.

You, that to the Fates allied  
Claim this just and ample power ;  
You, that o'er each house preside,  
Sovereign rulers of each hour ;

Goddesses, with holy dread  
Whose high state mankind revere,  
Here your softest influence shed,  
Here extend your guardian care.

MIN. This ready zeal accorded to my country  
 Delights me ; and with ardour must I love  
 Gentle persuasion, that hath tuned my voice  
 To move them from their stern and fierce resolves.  
 The pleading voice of Jove hath here prevailed ;  
 And my warm efforts in the cause of mercy  
 Extend their triumph through all future time.

CHOR. Ne'er may discord's hideous power  
 Here unsated stalk its round :  
 Slaughter ne'er with kindred gore  
 Madly drench the thirsty ground ;  
 Whilst revenge in barb'rous pride  
 Shakes the streets with thund'ring tread,  
 Blood for blood demands, and wide  
 Joys the mutual rage to spread.

But to union's soft command  
 May their minds harmonious move ;  
 Leagued in war, a friendly band ;  
 Tuned in peace to social love.

MIN. So the mild accents of the soothing tongue,  
 Attuned by wisdom, win their easy way :  
 And to this people from these horrid forms  
 I see much good. With gentle courtesy  
 Their courtesy requiting, always owned  
 By acts of highest reverence, you, whose care  
 Is watchful o'er this country and this seat  
 Of justice, all shall reap the meed of glory.

CHOR. Hail, with wealth, with glory graced  
 Citizens of Athens, hail !  
 Next to Jove in glory placed,  
 Never may your honours fail !  
 Trained to wisdom's sober lore,  
 Favoured with Minerva's love,

Guarded by her virgin power,  
 Dear through her to sovereign Jove.

MIN. And you all hail ! But be it mine to show  
 The place assigned you for your residence.  
 Go to those sacred flames, they will conduct you,  
 And from these hallowed victims sink with speed  
 To the dark shades below ; imprison there  
 Whate'er is noxious to these realms ; whate'er  
 Has influence to bless them, send in triumph.  
 And you, high-lineaged guardians of the State,  
 Attend these stranger-guests to their new seats,  
 And be each gentle thought attuned to good.

CHOR. Once more hail, and hail again,  
 All that here have fixed your seat ;  
 Mortal and immortal train,  
 Guardians of Minerva's state !

Here your residence I share,  
 To my power due homage pay,  
 Ne'er shall woe or sullen care  
 Cloud with grief life's golden day.

MIN. I like these votive measures ; and will send  
 The bright flames of these splendour-shedding torches,  
 With those that guard my hallowed image here,  
 Attendant on you to the dark abodes  
 Beneath the earth. And let th' Athenian train,  
 The grace, the glory of the wide-stretched world,  
 Their manly youth, their virgins' roseate bloom,  
 And their age-honoured matrons now advance,  
 Arrayed in richest vesture darting round  
 Its vermeil-tinctured radiance ; let the torches  
 Blaze, that this sable troop through future times  
 May shine conspicuous for their friendly aid.

## THE ATTENDANT TRAIN.

Remove then from this hallowed fane,  
Daughters of Night, remove your virgin train :  
    With festal pomp, and solemn tread,  
Reverend your awe-commanding state we lead.  
    Breathing blessings o'er this land  
    Seek your ancient caves below,  
    Leading Fortune in your hand,  
    Breathing blessings as you go.  
For you the altars rise, the victims bleed,  
    And sacred honours are decreed ;  
For you the rich libations dew the ground,  
    Whilst torches spread their blaze around.  
Go, in your glory then rejoicing go,  
    Go, and lead the Fates along,  
    Joining in this votive song ;  
Whilst on this city from his throne on high  
    Jove propitious bends his eye.  
Go then ; and as you move your friendly train,  
    Responsive to this warbled strain  
Harmonious bid your swelling voices flow.



## THE PERSIANS.

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No representation can be conceived more agreeable to a brave and free people, than that which sets before their eyes the ruin of an invading tyrant defeated by their own valour ; and no poet could ever claim the right of making such representation with so good a grace as Æschylus, who had borne a distinguished part in the real scene. Animated by his noble subject, and the enthusiasm with which he loved his country, he has here displayed all the warmth and dignity of his genius, but tempered at the same time with so chastised a judgment, that we are surprised to see the infant drama come forth at once with all those graces which constitute its perfection : it is like his own Minerva, that sprung from the head of Jupiter,

Then shining heavenly fair, a goddess armed.

Beside this wonderful management of the parts, the poet has the delicacy to set the glory of his countrymen in the brightest view, by putting their praises into the mouths of their enemies. Not satisfied with a spirited narration of their defeat, and a recital of the many royal chiefs that perished in that battle ; not satisfied with spreading the terror through all the realms of Persia, and placing them in a manner before our eyes in all the distress of desolation and despair, he hath interested even the dead, and, with the awful solemnity of a

religious incantation, evoked the ghost of Darius to testify to his Persians that no safety, no hope remained to them, if they continued their hostile attempts against Greece; so that this sublime conception hath engaged earth and sea, heaven and hell, to bear honourable testimony to the glory of his countrymen, and the superiority of their arms.

This tragedy was exhibited eight years after the defeat at Salamis, whilst the memory of each circumstance was yet recent; so that we may consider the narration as a faithful history of this great event. The war was not yet ended, though the Persian monarch had offered to make the most humiliating concessions, and the Athenians were inclined to accept them; but Themistocles opposed the peace. So that we are further to consider this play in a political light; the poet, by so animated a description of the pernicious effects of an obstinate pride, and by filling the spectators with a malignant compassion for the vanquished Xerxes, indirectly indisposing his countrymen to a continuation of the war. Thus everything at Athens, even their shows, had a respect to the public good. This is the fine remark of P. Brumoy.

The scene of this tragedy is at Susa, before the ancient structure appropriated to the great council of state, and near the tomb of Darius.

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PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

ATOSSA.

MESSSENGER.

GHOST OF DARIUS.

XERXES.

CHORUS, THE COUNCIL OF  
STATE.

---

CHORUS.

WHILST o'er the fields of Greece the embattled troops  
Of Persia march, with delegated sway  
We o'er their rich and gold-abounding seats

Hold faithful our firm guard ; to this high charge  
Xerxes, our royal lord, th' imperial son  
Of great Darius, chose our honoured age.  
But for the king's return, and his armed host  
Blazing with gold, my soul presaging ill  
Swells in my tortured breast : for all her force  
Hath Asia sent, and for her youth I sigh.  
Nor messenger arrives, nor horseman spurs  
With tidings to this seat of Persia's kings.  
The gates of Susa and Ecbatana  
Poured forth their martial trains ; and Cissia sees  
Her ancient towers forsaken, whilst her youth,  
Some on the bounding steed, the tall barque some  
Ascending, some with painful march on foot,  
Haste on, t' arrange the deepening files of war.  
Amistres, Artaphernes, and the might  
Of great Astaspes, Megabazes bold,  
Chieftains of Persia, kings, that to the power  
Of the great king obedient, march with these  
Leading their martial thousands ; their proud steeds  
Prance under them ; steel bows and shafts their arms,  
Dreadful to see, and terrible in fight,  
Deliberate valour breathing in their souls.  
Artembares, that in his fiery horse  
Delights ; Masistres ; and Imæus bold,  
Bending with manly strength his stubborn bow ;  
Pharandaces, and Sosthanes, that drives  
With military pomp his rapid steeds.  
Others the vast prolific Nile hath sent ;  
Pegastagon, that from Ægyptus draws  
His high birth ; Susiscanes ; and the chief  
That reigns o'er sacred Memphis, great Arsames ;  
And Ariomardus, that o'er ancient Thebes  
Bears the supreme dominion ; and with these

Drawn from their wat'ry marshes numbers trained  
 To the stout oar. Next these the Lycian troops,  
 Soft sons of luxury ; and those that dwell  
 Amidst the inland forests, from the sea  
 Far distant ; these Metragathes commands,  
 And virtuous Arceus, royal chiefs, that shine  
 In burnished gold, and many a whirling car  
 Drawn by six generous steeds from Sardis lead,  
 A glorious, and a dreadful spectacle.  
 And from the foot of Tmolus, sacred mount,  
 Eager to bind on Greece the servile yoke,  
 Mardon and Tharybis the massy spear  
 Grasp with unwearied vigour ; the light lance  
 The Mysians shake. A mingled multitude  
 Swept from her wide dominions, skilled to draw  
 Th' unerring bow, in ships Euphrates sends  
 From golden Babylon. With falchions armed  
 From all th' extent of Asia move the hosts  
 Obedient to their monarch's stern command.  
 Thus marched the flower of Persia, whose loved youth  
 The world of Asia nourished, and with sighs  
 Laments their absence ; many an anxious look  
 Their wives, their parents send, count the slow days,  
 And tremble at the long-protracted time.

*Strophe I.*

Already o'er the adverse strand  
 In arms the monarch's martial squadrons spread ;  
     The threat'ning ruin shakes the land,  
 And each tall city bows its towered head.  
     Barque bound to barque, their wondrous way  
     They bridge across th' indignant sea ;  
 The narrow Hellespont's vexed waves disdain,  
     His proud neck taught to wear the chain.

Now has the peopled Asia's warlike lord,  
 By land, by sea, with foot, with horse,  
 Resistless in his rapid course,  
 O'er all their realms his warring thousands poured ;  
 Now his intrepid chiefs surveys,  
 And glittering like a god his radiant state displays.

*Antistrophe 1.*

Fierce as the dragon scaled in gold  
 Through the deep files he darts his glowing eye ;  
 And pleased their order to behold,  
 His gorgeous standard blazing to the sky,  
 Rolls onward his Assyrian car,  
 Directs the thunder of the war,  
 Bids the winged arrows' iron storm advance,  
 Against the slow and cumbrous lance.  
 What shall withstand the torrent of his sway,  
 When dreadful o'er the yielding shores  
 Th' impetuous tide of battle roars,  
 And sweeps the weak-opposing mounds away ?  
 So Persia with resistless might  
 Rolls her unnumbered hosts of heroes to the fight.

*Strophe 2.*

For when misfortune's fraudulent hand  
 Prepares to pour the vengeance of the sky,  
 What mortal shall her force withstand,  
 What rapid speed th' impending fury fly ?  
 Gentle at first with flattering smiles  
 She spreads her soft enchanting wiles,  
 So to her toils allures her destined prey,  
 Whence man ne'er breaks unhurt away.  
 For thus from ancient times the Fates ordain,  
 That Persia's sons should greatly dare,  
 Unequalled in the works of war :

Shake with their thund'ring steeds th' ensanguined plain,  
 Dreadful the hostile walls surround,  
 And lay their rampired towers in ruins on the ground.

*Antistrophe 2.*

Taught to behold with fearless eyes,  
 The whitening billows foam beneath the gale,  
 They bid the naval forests rise,  
 Mount the slight barque, unfurl the flying sail,  
 And o'er the angry ocean bear  
 To distant realms the storm of war.  
 For this with many a sad and gloomy thought  
 My tortured breast is fraught :  
 Ah me ! for Persia's absent sons I sigh ;  
 For whilst in foreign fields they fight,  
 Our towns exposed to wild affright  
 An easy prey to the invader lie :  
 Where, mighty Susa, where thy powers,  
 To wield the warrior's arms, and guard my regal  
 towers ?

*Epode.*

Crushed beneath th' assailing foe  
 Her golden head must Cissia bend ;  
 Whilst her pale virgins, frantic with despair,  
 Through all her streets awake the voice of woe ;  
 And flying with their bosoms bare,  
 Their purpled stoles in anguish rend :  
 For all her youth in martial pride,  
 Like bees that, clustering round their king,  
 Their dark-embodied squadrons bring,  
 Attend their sceptred monarch's side,  
 And stretch across the wat'ry way  
 From shore to shore their long array.

The Persian dames with many a tender fear  
 In grief's sad vigils keep the midnight hour ;  
 Shed on the widowed couch the streaming tear,  
 And the long absence of their loves deplore.  
 Each lonely matron feels her pensive breast  
 Throb with desire, with aching fondness glow,  
 Since in bright arms her daring warrior drest  
 Left her to languish in her love-lorn woe.

CHOR. Now ye grave Persians, that your honoured seats  
 Hold in this ancient house, with prudent care  
 And deep deliberation, so the State  
 Requires, consult we, pond'ring the event  
 Of this great war, which our imperial lord,  
 The mighty Xerxes from Darius sprung,  
 The stream of whose rich blood flows in our veins,  
 Leads against Greece ; whether his arrowy shower  
 Shot from the strong-braced bow, or the huge spear  
 High brandished, in the deathful field prevails.  
 But see, the monarch's mother : like the gods  
 Her lustre blazes on our eyes. My queen,  
 Prostrate I fall before her : all advance  
 With reverence, and in duteous phrase address her.

WHOLE CHOR. Hail queen, of Persia's high-zoned dames  
 supreme,  
 Age-honoured mother of the potent Xerxes,  
 Imperial consort of Darius, hail !  
 The wife, the mother of the Persian's god,  
 If yet our former glories fade not from us.

ATOS. And therefore am I come, leaving my house  
 That shines with gorgeous ornaments and gold,  
 Where in past days Darius held with me  
 His royal residence. With anxious care  
 My heart is tortured : I will tell you, friends,  
 My thoughts, not otherwise devoid of fear,

Lest mighty wealth with haughty foot o'erturn  
 And trample in the dust that happiness,  
 Which, not unblessed by Heaven, Darius raised.  
 For this with double force unquiet thoughts  
 Past utterance fill my soul ; that neither wealth  
 With all its golden stores, where men are wanting,  
 Claims reverence ; nor the light, that beams from power,  
 Shines on the man, whom wealth disdains to grace.  
 The golden stores of wealth indeed are ours ;  
 But for the light, such in the house I deem  
 The presence of its lord, there I have fears.  
 Advise me then you, whose experienced age  
 Supports the state of Persia : prudence guides  
 Your councils, always kind and faithful to me.

CHOR. Speak, royal lady, what thy will, assured,  
 We want no second bidding, where our power  
 In word or deed waits on our zeal : our hearts  
 In this with honest duty shall obey thee.

ATOS. Oft, since my son hath marched his mighty host  
 Against th' Ionians, warring to subdue  
 Their country, have my slumbers been disturbed  
 With dreams of dread portent ; but most last night,  
 With marks of plainest proof. I'll tell thee then.  
 Methought two women stood before my eyes  
 Gorgeously vested, one in Persian robes  
 Adorned, the other in the Doric garb.  
 With more than mortal majesty they moved,  
 Of peerless beauty ; sisters too they seemed,  
 Though distant each from each they chanced to dwell,  
 In Greece the one, on the barbaric coast  
 The other. 'Twixt them soon dissension rose :  
 My son then hasted to compose their strife,  
 Soothed them to fair accord, beneath his car  
 Yokes them, and reins their harnessed necks. The one,



Exulting in her rich array, with pride  
Arching her stately neck, obeyed the reins ;  
The other with indignant fury spurned  
The car, and dashed it piecemeal, rent the reins,  
And tore the yoke asunder : down my son  
Fell from the seat, and instant at his side  
His father stands, Darius, at his fall  
Impressed with pity : him when Xerxes saw,  
Glowing with grief and shame he rends his robes.  
This was the dreadful vision of the night.  
When I arose, in the sweet flowing stream  
I bathed my hands, and on the incensed altars  
Presenting my oblations to the gods  
T' avert these ills, an eagle I beheld  
Fly to the altar of the sun : aghast  
I stood, my friends, and speechless ; when a hawk  
With eager speed runs thither, furious cuffs  
The eagle with his wings, and with his talons  
Unplumes his head ; meantime th' imperial bird  
Cowers to the blows defenceless. Dreadful this  
To me that saw it, and to you that hear.  
My son, let conquest crown his arms, would shine  
With dazzling glory ; but should fortune frown,  
The State indeed presumes not to arraign  
His sovereignty, yet how, his honour lost,  
How shall he sway the sceptre of this land ?

CHOR. We would not, royal lady, sink thy soul  
With fear in the excess, nor raise it high  
With confidence. Go then, address the gods ;  
If thou hast seen aught ill, entreat their power  
T' avert that ill, and perfect every good  
To thee, thy sons, the State, and all thy friends.  
Then to the earth, and to the mighty dead  
Behoves thee pour libations : gently call

Him that was once thy husband, whom thou saw'st  
 In visions of the night ; entreat his shade  
 From the deep realms beneath to send to light  
 Triumph to thee, and to thy son ; whate'er  
 Bears other import, to enwrap, to hide it  
 Close in the covering earth's profoundest gloom.  
 This in the presage of my thoughts that flow  
 Benevolent to thee, have I proposed ;  
 And all, we trust, shall be successful to thee. [dreams

ATOS. Thy friendly judgment first hath placed these  
 In a fair light, confirming the event  
 Benevolent to my son, and to my house.  
 May all the good be ratified ! These rites  
 Shall, at thy bidding, to the powers of Heaven,  
 And to the manes of our friends ; be paid  
 In order meet, when I return : meanwhile  
 Indulge me, friends, who wish to be informed  
 Where, in what clime, the towers of Athens rise.

CHOR. Far in the west, where sets th' imperial sun.

ATOS. Yet my son willed the conquest of this town.

CHOR. May Greece through all her States bend to his  
 power.

ATOS. Send they embattled numbers to the field ?

CHOR. A force, that to the Medes hath wrought much woe.

ATOS. Have they sufficient treasures in their houses ?

CHOR. Their rich earth yields a copious fount of silver.

ATOS. From the strong bow wing they the barbed shaft ?

CHOR. They grasp the stout spear, and the massy shield.

ATOS. What monarch reigns, whose power commands  
 their ranks ?

CHOR. Slaves to no lord, they own no kingly power.

ATOS. How can they then resist th' invading foe ?

CHOR. As to spread havoc through the numerous host,  
 That round Darius formed their glittering files.

ATOS. Thy words strike deep, and wound the parent's  
breast,

Whose sons are marched to such a dangerous field.

CHOR. But, if I judge aright, thou soon shalt hear  
Each circumstance ; for this way, mark him, speeds  
A Persian messenger : he bears, be sure,  
Tidings of high import, or good or ill.

ATOSSA, CHORUS, MESSENGER.

MESSENGER. Woe to the towns through Asia's peopled  
Woe to the land of Persia, once the port [realms !  
Of boundless wealth, how is thy glorious state  
Vanished at once, and all thy spreading honours  
Fall'n, lost ! Ah me ! unhappy is his task  
That bears unhappy tidings : but constraint  
Compels me to relate this tale of woe.  
Persians, the whole barbaric host is fall'n.

CHOR. O horror, horror ! What a baleful train  
Of recent ills ! Ah Persians, as he speaks  
Of ruin, let your tears stream to the earth.

MES. It is even so, all ruin ; and myself,  
Beyond all hope returning, view this light.

CHOR. How tedious and oppressive is the weight  
Of age, reserved to hear these hopeless ills !

MES. I speak not from report ; but these mine eyes  
Beheld the ruin which my tongue would utter.

CHOR. Woe, woe is me ! Then has the iron storm,  
That darkened from the realms of Asia, poured  
In vain its arrowy shower on sacred Greece.

MES. In heaps th' unhappy dead lie on the strand  
Of Salamis, and all the neighbouring shores.

CHOR. Unhappy friends, sunk, perished in the sea ;  
Their bodies 'midst the wreck of shattered ships,  
Mangled, and rolling on th' encumbered waves !

MES. Nought did their bows avail, but all the troops  
In the first conflict of the ships were lost.

CHOR. Raise the funereal cry, with dismal notes  
Wailing the wretched Persians. Oh, how ill  
They planned their measures, all their army perished !

MES. O Salamis, how hateful is thy name !  
And groans burst from me when I think of Athens.

CHOR. How dreadful to her foes ! Call to remem-  
brance

How many Persian dames, wedded in vain,  
Hath Athens of their noble husbands widowed !

ATOS. Astonied with these ills, my voice thus long  
Hath wanted utterance : griefs like these exceed  
The power of speech, or question : yet e'en such,  
Inflicted by the gods, must mortal man  
Constrained by hard necessity endure.

But tell me all, without distraction tell me,  
All this calamity, though many a groan  
Burst from thy labouring heart. Who is not fallen ?  
What leader must we wail ? What sceptred chief  
Dying hath left his troops without a lord ?

MES. Xerxes himself lives, and beholds the light.

ATOS. That word beams comfort on my house, a ray  
That brightens through the melancholy gloom.

MES. Artembares, the potent chief that led  
Ten thousand horse, lies slaughtered on the rocks  
Of rough Sileniæ. The great Dadaces,  
Beneath whose standard marched a thousand horse,  
Pierced by a spear fell headlong from the ship.  
Tenagon, bravest of the Bactrians, lies  
Rolled on the wave-worn beach of Ajax' isle.  
Lilæus, Arsames, Argestes dash  
With violence in death against the rocks  
Where nest the silver doves. Arceus, that dwelt

Near to the fountains of the Ægyptian Nile,  
 Adeues, and Pheresba, and Pharnuchus,  
 Fell from one ship. Matallus, Chrysa's chief,  
 That led his dark'ning squadrons, thrice ten thousand,  
 On jet-black steeds, with purple gore distained  
 The yellow of his thick and shaggy beard.  
 The Magian Arabus, and Artames  
 From Bactra, mould'ring on the dreary shore  
 Lie low. Amistris, and Amphistreus there  
 Grasps his war-wearied spear ; there prostrate lies  
 Th' illustrious Ariomardus ; long his loss  
 Shall Sardis weep : the Mysian Sisames,  
 And Tharybis, that o'er the burdened deep  
 Led five times fifty vessels ; Lerna gave  
 The hero birth, and manly grace adorned  
 His pleasing form, but low in death he lies  
 Unhappy in his fate. Syennesis,  
 Cilicia's warlike chief, who dared to front  
 The foremost dangers, singly to the foes  
 A terror, there too found a glorious death.  
 These chieftains to my sad remembrance rise,  
 Relating but a few of many ills.

ATOS. This is the height of ill, ah me ! and shame  
 To Persia, grief, and lamentation loud.  
 But tell me this, afresh renew thy tale,  
 What was the number of the Grecian fleet,  
 That in fierce conflict their bold barques should dare  
 Rush to encounter with the Persian hosts.

MES. Know then, in numbers the barbaric fleet  
 Was far superior : in ten squadrons, each  
 Of thirty ships, Greece ploughed the deep ; of these  
 One held a distant station. Xerxes led  
 A thousand ships ; their number well I know ;  
 Two hundred more, and seven, that swept the seas

With speediest sail : this was their full amount.  
And in th' engagement seemed we not secure  
Of victory? But unequal fortune sunk  
Our scale in fight, discomfiting our host.

ATOS. The gods preserve the city of Minerva.

MES. The walls of Athens are impregnable,  
Their firmest bulwarks her heroic sons.

ATOS. Which navy first advanced to the attack?  
Who led to th' onset, tell me; the bold Greeks,  
Or, glorying in his numerous fleet, my son?

MES. Our evil genius, lady, or some god  
Hostile to Persia, led to ev'ry ill.

Forth from the troops of Athens came a Greek,  
And thus addressed thy son, th' imperial Xerxes :  
"Soon as the shades of night descend, the Grecians  
Shall quit their station; rushing to their oars  
They mean to separate, and in secret flight  
Seek safety." At these words the royal chief,  
Little conceiving of the wiles of Greece  
And gods averse, to all the naval leaders  
Gave his high charge : "Soon as yon sun shall cease  
To dart his radiant beams, and dark'ning night  
Ascends the temple of the sky, arrange  
In three divisions your well-ordered ships,  
And guard each pass, each outlet of the seas :  
Others enring around this rocky isle  
Of Salamis : should Greece escape her fate,  
And work her way by secret flight, your heads  
Shall answer the neglect." This harsh command  
He gave, exulting in his mind, nor knew  
What fate designed. With martial discipline  
And prompt obedience, snatching a repast,  
Each mariner fixed well his ready oar.  
Soon as the golden sun was set, and night

Advanced, each trained to ply the dashing oar  
Assumed his seat ; in arms each warrior stood,  
Troop cheering troop through all the ships of war.  
Each to the appointed station steers his course ;  
And through the night his naval force each chief  
Fixed to secure the passes. Night advanced,  
But not by secret flight did Greece attempt  
T' escape. The morn, all beauteous to behold,  
Drawn by white steeds bounds o'er th' enlightened earth ;  
At once from ev'ry Greek with glad acclaim  
Burst forth the song of war, whose lofty notes  
The echo of the island rocks returned,  
Spreading dismay through Persia's hosts thus fallen  
From their high hopes ; no flight this solemn strain  
Portended, but deliberate valour bent  
On daring battle ; whilst the trumpet's sound  
Kindled the flames of war. But when their oars,  
The pæan ended, with impetuous force  
Dashed the resounding surges, instant all  
Rushed on in view ; in orderly array  
The squadron on the right first led, behind  
Rode their whole fleet ; and now distinct we heard  
From ev'ry part this voice of exhortation :  
“ Advance, ye sons of Greece, from thralldom save  
Your country, save your wives, your children save,  
The temples of your gods, the sacred tomb  
Where rest your honoured ancestors ; this day  
The common cause of all demands your valour.”  
Meantime from Persia's hosts the deep'ning shout  
Answered their shout ; no time for cold delay ;  
But ship 'gainst ship its brazen beak impelled.  
First to the charge a Grecian galley rushed ;  
Ill the Phœnician bore the rough attack,  
Its sculptured prow all shattered. Each advanced

Daring an opposite. The deep array  
Of Persia at the first sustained th' encounter ;  
But their thronged numbers, in the narrow seas  
Confined, want room for action ; and deprived  
Of mutual aid beaks clash with beaks, and each  
Breaks all the other's oars : with skill disposed  
The Grecian navy circled them around  
With fierce assault ; and rushing from its height  
Th' inverted vessel sinks : the sea no more  
Wears its accustomed aspect, with foul wrecks  
And blood disfigured ; floating carcasses  
Roll on the rocky shores ; the poor remains  
Of the barbaric armament to flight  
Ply ev'ry oar inglorious ; onward rush  
The Greeks amidst the ruins of the fleet,  
As through a shoal of fish caught in a net,  
Spreading destruction : the wide ocean o'er  
Wailings are heard, and loud laments, till night  
With darkness on her brow brought grateful truce.  
Should I recount each circumstance of woe,  
Ten times on my unfinished tale the sun  
Would set ; for be assured that not one day  
Could close the ruin of so vast an host.

ATOS. Ah, what a boundless sea of woe hath burst  
On Persia, and the whole barbaric race !

MES. These are not half, not half our ills ; on these  
Came an assemblage of calamities,  
That sunk us with a double weight of woe.

ATOS. What fortune can be more unfriendly to us  
Than this ? Say on, what dread calamity  
Sunk Persia's host with greater weight of woe.

MES. Whoe'er of Persia's warriors glowed in prime  
Of vig'rous youth, or felt their generous souls  
Expand with courage, or for noble birth



Shone with distinguished lustre, or excelled  
 In firm and duteous loyalty, all these  
 Are fall'n, ignobly, miserably fall'n.

ATOS. Alas their ruthless fate, unhappy friends !  
 But in what manner, tell me, did they perish ?

MES. Full against Salamis an isle arises  
 Of small circumference, to the anchored barque  
 Unfaithful ; on the promontory's brow,  
 That overlooks the sea, Pan loves to lead  
 The dance ; to this the monarch sends these chiefs,  
 That when the Grecians from their shattered ships  
 Should here seek shelter, these might hew them down  
 An easy conquest, and secure the strand  
 To their sea-wearied friends ; ill judging what  
 Th' event : but when the fav'ring god to Greece  
 Gave the proud glory of this naval fight,  
 Instant in all their glitt'ring arms they leaped  
 From their light ships, and all the island round  
 Encompassed, that our bravest stood dismayed ;  
 Whilst broken rocks whirled with tempestuous force,  
 And storms of arrows crushed them ; then the Greeks  
 Rush to th' attack at once, and furious spread  
 The carnage, till each mangled Persian fell.  
 Deep were the groans of Xerxes, when he saw  
 This havoc ; for his seat, a lofty mound  
 Commanding the wide sea, o'erlooked his hosts.  
 With rueful cries he rent his royal robes,  
 And through his troops embattled on the shore  
 Gave signal of retreat ; then started wild,  
 And fled disordered. To the former ills  
 These are fresh miseries to awake thy sighs.

ATOS. Invidious fortune, how thy baleful power  
 Hath sunk the hopes of Persia ! Bitter fruit  
 My son hath tasted from his purposed vengeance

On Athens famed for arms ; the fatal field  
Of Marathon, red with barbaric blood,  
Sufficed not ; that defeat he thought t' avenge,  
And pulled this hideous ruin on his head.  
But tell me, if thou canst, where didst thou leave  
The ships, that happily escaped the wreck ?

MES. The poor remains of Persia's scattered fleet  
Spread ev'ry sail for flight, as the wind drives,  
In wild disorder. And on land no less  
The ruined army ; in Bœotia some,  
With thirst oppressed, at Crene's cheerful rills  
Were lost ; forespent with breathless speed some pass  
The fields of Phocis, some the Doric plain,  
And near the gulf of Melia, the rich vale  
Through which Sperchius rolls his friendly stream.  
Achaia thence and the Thessalian state  
Received our famished train ; the greater part  
Through thirst and hunger perished there, oppressed  
At once by both : but we our painful steps  
Held onwards to Magnesia, and the land  
Of Macedonia, o'er the ford of Axius,  
And Bolbe's sedgy marches, and the heights  
Of steep Pangæos, to the realms of Thrace.  
That night, ere yet the season, breathing frore  
Rushed winter, and with ice encrusted o'er  
The flood of sacred Strymon : such as owned  
No god till now, awe-struck, with many a prayer  
Adored the earth and sky. When now the troops  
Had ceased their invocations to the gods,  
O'er the stream's solid crystal they began  
Their march ; and we, who took our early way  
Ere the sun darted his warm beams, passed safe :  
But when his burning orb with fiery rays  
Unbound the middle current, down they sunk

Each over other ; happiest he who found  
 The speediest death ; the poor remains that 'scaped,  
 With pain through Thrace dragged on their toilsome march,  
 A feeble few, and reached their native soil ;  
 That Persia sighs through all her States, and mourns  
 Her dearest youth. This is no feigned tale ;  
 But many of the ills, that burst upon us  
 In dreadful vengeance, I refrain to utter.

CHOR. O fortune, heavy with affliction's load,  
 How hath thy foot crushed all the Persian race !

ATOS. Ah me, what sorrows for our ruined host  
 Oppress my soul ! Ye visions of the night  
 Haunting my dreams, how plainly did you show  
 These ills ! You set them in too fair a light.  
 Yet, since your bidding hath in this prevailed,  
 First to the gods wish I to pour my prayers,  
 Then to the mighty dead present my off'rings,  
 Bringing libations from my house : too late,  
 I know, to change the past ; yet for the future,  
 If haply better fortune may await it.  
 Behoves you, on this sad event, to guide  
 Your friends with faithful counsels. Should my son  
 Return ere I have finished, let your voice  
 Speak comfort to him ; friendly to his house  
 Attend him, nor let sorrow rise on sorrows.

*Strophe.*

Awful sovereign of the skies,  
 When now o'er Persia's numerous host  
 Thou bad'st the storm with ruin rise,  
 All her proud vaunts of glory lost,  
 Ecbatana's imperial head  
 By thee was wrapt in sorrow's dark'ning shade  
 Through Susa's palaces with loud lament,

By their soft hands their veils all rent,  
 The copious tear the virgins pour,  
 That trickles their bare bosoms o'er.  
 From her sweet couch up starts the widowed bride,  
 Her lord's loved image rushing on her soul,  
 Throws the rich ornaments of youth aside,  
 And gives her griefs to flow without control :  
 Her griefs not causeless ; for the mighty slain  
 Our melting tears demand, and sorrow-softened strain.

*Antistrophe.*

Now her wailings wide despair  
 Pours these exhausted regions o'er ;  
 Xerxes, ill-fated, led the war ;  
 Xerxes, ill-fated, leads no more ;  
 Xerxes sent forth th' unwise command,  
 The crowded ships unpeopled all the land ;  
 That land, o'er which Darius held his reign,  
 Courting the arts of peace, in vain,  
 O'er all his grateful realms adored,  
 The stately Susa's gentle lord.  
 Black o'er the waves his burdened vessels sweep,  
 For Greece elate the warlike squadrons fly ;  
 Now crushed and whelmed beneath th' indignant deep  
 The shattered wrecks and lifeless heroes lie :  
 Whilst, from the arms of Greece escaped, with toil  
 Th' unsheltered monarch roams o'er Thracia's dreary soil.

*Epode.*

The first in battle slain  
 By Cychrea's craggy shore  
 Through sad constraint, ah me ! forsaken lie,  
 All pale and smeared with gore ;  
 Raise high the mournful strain,

And let the voice of anguish pierce the sky :  
 Or roll beneath the roaring tide,  
 By monsters rent of touch abhorred ;  
 Whilst through the widowed mansion echoing wide  
 Sounds the deep groan, and wails its slaughtered lord :  
 Pale with his fears the helpless orphan there  
 Gives the full stream of plaintive grief to flow ;  
 Whilst age its hoary head in deep despair  
 Bends, listening to the shrieks of woe.

With sacred awe  
 The Persian law  
 No more shall Asia's realms revere ;  
 To their lord's hand,  
 At his command,  
 No more the exacted tribute bear.  
 Who now falls prostrate at the monarch's throne?  
 His regal greatness is no more.  
 Now no restraint the wanton tongue shall own,  
 Free from the golden curb of power ;  
 For on the rocks, washed by the beating flood,  
 His awe-commanding nobles lie in blood.

ATOSSA, CHORUS.

ATOSSA. Whoe'er, my friends, in the rough stream of life  
 Hath struggled with affliction, thence is taught  
 That, when the flood begins to swell, the heart  
 Fondly fears all things : when the fav'ring gale  
 Of fortune smooths the current, it expands  
 With unsuspecting confidence, and deems  
 That gale shall always breathe. So to my eyes  
 All things now wear a formidable shape,  
 And threaten from the gods : my ears are pierced  
 With sounds far other than of song. Such ills  
 Dismay my sick'ning soul : hence from my house

Nor glitt'ring car attends me, nor the train  
 Of wonted state, whilst I return, and bear  
 Libations soothing to the father's shade  
 In the son's cause ; delicious milk, that foams  
 White from the sacred heifer : liquid honey,  
 Extract of flowers ; and from its virgin fount  
 The running crystal ; this pure draught, that flowed  
 From th' ancient vine, of power to bathe the spirits  
 In joy ; the yellow olive's fragrant fruit,  
 That glories in its leaves' unfading verdure ;  
 With flowers of various hues, earth's fairest offspring,  
 Inwreathed. But you, my friends, amidst these rites  
 Raise high your solemn warblings, and invoke  
 Your lord, divine Darius ; I meanwhile  
 Will pour these off'rings to the infernal gods.

CHOR. Yes, royal lady, Persia's honoured grace,  
 To earth's dark chambers pour thy off'rings : we  
 With choral hymns will supplicate the powers  
 That guide the dead, to be propitious to us.  
 And you, that o'er the realms of night extend  
 Your sacred sway, the mighty earth, and thee  
 Hermes ; thee chief, tremendous king, whose throne  
 Awes with supreme dominion, I adjure :  
 Send, from your gloomy regions, send his shade  
 Once more to visit this ethereal light ;  
 That he alone, if aught of dread event  
 He sees yet threat'ning Persia, may disclose  
 To us poor mortals Fate's extreme decree.

Hears the honoured godlike king?  
 These barbaric notes of woe,  
 Taught in descant sad to ring,  
 Hears he in the shades below?  
 Thou, O Earth, and you, that lead  
 Through your sable realms the dead,

Guide him as he takes his way,  
And give him to th' ethereal light of day !

Let th' illustrious shade arise  
Glorious in his radiant state,  
More than blazed before our eyes,  
Ere sad Susa mourned his fate.  
Dear he lived, his tomb is dear,  
Shining virtues we revere,  
Send then, monarch of the dead,  
Such as Darius was, Darius' shade.

He in realm-unpeopling war  
Wasted not his subjects' blood,  
Godlike in his will to spare,  
In his councils wise and good.  
Rise then, sovereign lord, to light ;  
On this mound's sepulchral height  
Lift thy sock in saffron dyed,  
And rear thy rich tiara's regal pride !

Great and good, Darius, rise :  
Lord of Persia's lord, appear,  
Thus invoked with thrilling cries  
Come, our tale of sorrow hear !  
Woe her Stygian pennons spreads,  
Brooding darkness o'er our heads ;  
For stretched along the dreary shore  
The flower of Asia lies distained with gore.

Rise, Darius, awful power ;  
Long for thee our tears shall flow.  
Why thy ruined empire o'er  
Swells this double flood of woe ?  
Sweeping o'er the azure tide  
Rode thy navy's gallant pride ;  
Navy now no more, for all  
Beneath the whelming wave——

## GHOST OF DARIUS, ATOSSA, CHORUS.

DARIUS. Ye faithful Persians, honoured now in age,  
 Once the companions of my youth, what ills  
 Afflict the State? The firm earth groans, it opes,  
 Disclosing its vast deeps ; and near my tomb  
 I see my wife : this shakes my troubled soul  
 With fearful apprehensions ; yet her off'rings  
 Pleased I received. And you around my tomb  
 Chanting the lofty strain, whose solemn air  
 Draws forth the dead, with grief-tempered notes  
 Mournfully call me : not with ease the way  
 Leads to this upper air ; and the stern gods,  
 Prompt to admit, yield not a passage back  
 But with reluctance : much with them my power  
 Availing, with no tardy step I come.  
 Say then, with what new ill doth Persia groan ?

CHOR. My wonted awe o'ercomes me ; in thy presence  
 I dare not raise my eyes, I dare not speak.

DAR. Since from the realms below, by thy sad strains  
 Adjured, I come, speak, let thy words be brief,  
 Say whence thy grief, tell me unawed by fear.

CHOR. I dread to forge a flattering tale, I dread  
 To grieve thee with a harsh offensive truth. [dame,

DAR. Since fear hath chained his tongue, high-honoured  
 Once my imperial consort, check thy tears,  
 Thy griefs ; and speak distinctly. Mortal man  
 Must bear his lot of woe ; afflictions rise  
 Many from sea, many from land, if life  
 Be haply measured through a lengthened course.

ATOS. O thou, that graced with fortune's choicest gifts  
 Surpassing mortals, whilst thine eye beheld  
 Yon sun's ethereal rays, liv'dst like a god  
 Blest 'midst thy Persians ; blest I deem thee now



In death, ere sunk in this abyss of ills ;

Darius, hear at once our sum of woe,

Ruin through all her States hath crushed thy Persia.

DAR. By pestilence, or faction's furious storms ?

ATOS. Not so : near Athens perished all our troops.

DAR. Say, of my sons which led the forces thither ?

ATOS. The impetuous Xerxes, thinning all the land.

DAR. By sea or land dared he this rash attempt ?

ATOS. By both : a double front the war presented.

DAR. A host so vast what march conducted o'er ?

ATOS. From shore to shore he bridged the Hellespont.

DAR. What, could he chain the mighty Bosphorus ?

ATOS. E'en so, some god assisting his design.

DAR. Some god of power to cloud his better sense.

ATOS. Th' event now shows what mischiefs he achieved.

DAR. What suffered they, for whom your sorrows flow ?

ATOS. His navy sunk spreads ruin through the camp.

DAR. Fell all his host beneath the slaughter'ing spear ?

ATOS. Susa, through all her streets, mourns her lost sons.

DAR. How vain the succour, the defence of arms !

ATOS. In Bactra age and grief are only left.

DAR. Ah, what a train of warlike youth is lost !

ATOS. Xerxes, astonished, desolate, alone——

DAR. How will this end ? Nay, pause not. Is he safe ?

ATOS. Fled o'er the bridge, that joined the adverse  
strands.

DAR. And reached this shore in safety ? Is this true ?

ATOS. True are thy words, and not to be gainsaid.

DAR. With what a winged course the oracles

Haste their completion ! With the lightning's speed

Jove on my son hath hurled his threatened vengeance :

Yet I implored the gods that it might fall

In time's late process : but when rashness drives

Impetuous on, the scourge of Heaven upraised

Lashes the fury forward ; hence these ills  
 Pour headlong on my friends. Not weighing this  
 My son, with all the fiery pride of youth,  
 Hath quickened their arrival, whilst he hoped  
 To bind the sacred Hellespont, to hold  
 The raging Bosphorus, like a slave, in chains.  
 And dared th' advent'rous passage, bridging firm  
 With links of solid iron his wondrous way,  
 To lead his numerous host ; and, swelled with thoughts  
 Presumptuous, deemed, vain mortal, that his power  
 Should rise above the gods, and Neptune's might.  
 And was not this the frenzy of the soul ?  
 But much I fear lest all my treasured wealth  
 Fall to some daring hand an easy prey.

ATOS. This from too frequent converse with bad men  
 Th' impetuous Xerxes learned : these caught his ear  
 With thy great deeds, as winning for thy sons  
 Vast riches with thy conquering spear, whilst he  
 Tim'rous and slothful never, save in sport,  
 Lifted his lance, nor added to the wealth  
 Won by his noble fathers. This reproach,  
 Oft by bad men repeated, urged his soil  
 T' attempt this war, and lead his troops to Greece.

DAR. Great deeds have they achieved, and memorable  
 For ages : never hath this wasted State  
 Suffered such ruin, since Heaven's awful king  
 Gave to one lord Asia's extended plains  
 White with innumerable flocks, and to his hands  
 Consigned th' imperial sceptre. Her brave hosts  
 A Mede first led. The virtues of his son  
 Fixed firm the empire, for his temperate soul  
 Breathed prudence. Cyrus next, by fortune graced,  
 Adorned the throne, and blessed his grateful friends  
 With peace : he to his mighty monarchy

Joined Lydia, and the Phrygians; to his power  
 Ionia bent reluctant; but the gods  
 With victory his gentle virtues crowned.  
 His son then wore the regal diadem.  
 Next, to disgrace his country, and to stain  
 The splendid glories of this ancient throne,  
 Rose Mardus: him with righteous vengeance fired  
 Artaphrenes, and his confederate chiefs,  
 Crushed in his palace: Maraphis assumed  
 The sceptre: after him Artaphrenes.  
 Me next to this exalted eminence,  
 Crowning my great ambition, fortune raised;  
 In many a glorious field my glittering spear  
 Flamed in the van of Persia's numerous hosts;  
 But never wrought such ruin to the State.  
 Xerxes, my son, in all the pride of youth  
 Listens to youthful counsels, my commands  
 No more remembered: hence, my hoary friends,  
 Not the whole line of Persia's sceptred lords,  
 You know it well, so wasted her brave sons.

CHOR. Why this? To what fair end are these thy words  
 Directed? Sovereign lord, instruct thy Persians  
 How, 'midst this ruin, best to guide their State.

DAR. No more 'gainst Greece lead your embattled hosts;  
 Not though your deepening phalanx spreads the field  
 Outnumbering theirs: their very earth fights for them.

CHOR. What may thy words import? How fight for  
 them?

DAR. With famine it destroys your cumbrous train.

CHOR. Choice levies, prompt for action, will we send.

DAR. Those, in the fields of Greece that now remain,  
 Shall not revisit safe the Persian shore.

CHOR. What, shall not all the host of Persia pass  
 Again from Europe o'er the Hellespont?

DAR. Of all their numbers few, if aught avails  
The faith of heaven-sent oracles to him  
That weighs the past, in their accomplishment  
Not partial : hence he left, in faithless hope  
Confiding, his selected train of heroes.  
These have their station where Asopus flows  
Wat'ring the plain, whose grateful currents roll  
Diffusing plenty through Bœotia's fields.  
There misery waits to crush them with the load  
Of heaviest ills, in vengeance for their proud  
And impious daring ; for where'er they held  
Through Greece their march, they feared not to  
profane  
The statues of the gods ; their hallowed shrines  
Emblazed, o'erturned their altars, and in ruins,  
Rent from their firm foundations, to the ground  
Levelled their temples. Such their frantic deeds,  
Nor less their sufferings : greater still await them ;  
For vengeance hath not wasted all her stores,  
The heap yet swells : for in Platæa's plains  
Beneath the Doric spear the clotted mass  
Of carnage shall arise, that the high mounds,  
Piled o'er the dead, to late posterity  
Shall give this silent record to men's eyes,  
That proud aspiring thoughts but ill beseem  
Weak mortals : for oppression, when it springs,  
Puts forth the blade of vengeance, and its fruit  
Yields a ripe harvest of repentant woe.  
Behold this vengeance, and remember Greece,  
Remember Athens : henceforth let not pride,  
Her present state disdaining, strive to grasp  
Another's, and her treasured happiness  
Shed on the ground : such insolent attempts  
Awake the vengeance of offended Jove.

But you, whose age demands more temperate thoughts,  
 With words of well-placed counsel teach his youth  
 To curb that pride, which from the gods calls down  
 Destruction on his head. And thou, whose age  
 The miseries of thy Xerxes sink with sorrow,  
 Go to thy house, thence choose the richest robe,  
 And meet thy son ; for through the rage of grief  
 His gorgeous vestments from his royal limbs  
 Are foully rent. With gentlest courtesy  
 Soothe his affliction ; for his duteous ear,  
 I know, will listen to thy voice alone.  
 Now to the realms of darkness I descend.  
 My ancient friends, farewell, and 'midst these ills  
 Each day in pleasures bathe your drooping spirits,  
 For treasured riches nought avail the dead.

## ATOSSA, CHORUS.

CHORUS. These many present, many future ills  
 Denounced on Persia sink my soul with grief.

ATOS. Unhappy fortune, what a tide of ills  
 Bursts o'er me ! Chief this foul disgrace, which shows  
 My son divested of his rich attire,  
 His royal robes all rent, distracts my thoughts.  
 But I will go, choose the most gorgeous vest,  
 And haste to meet my son. Ne'er in his woes  
 Will I forsake whom my soul holds most dear.

## CHORUS.

*Strophe 1.*

Ye powers that rule the skies,  
 Memory recalls our great, our happy fate,  
 Our well-appointed state,  
 The scenes of glory opening to our eyes,  
 When this vast empire o'er

The good Darius, with each virtue blest  
 That forms a monarch's breast,  
 Shielding his subjects with a father's care,  
 Invincible in war,  
 Extended like a god his awful power.  
 Then spread our arms their glory wide,  
 Guarding to peace her golden reign ;  
 Each towered city saw with pride  
 Safe from the toils of war her homeward marching train.

*Antistrophe 1.*

Nor Halys' shallow strand  
 He passed, nor from his palace moved his state ;  
 He spoke ; his word was fate :  
 What strong-based cities could his might withstand ?  
 Not those that lift their heads  
 Where to the sea the floods of Strymon pass,  
 Leaving the huts of Thrace ;  
 Nor those, that far th' extended ocean o'er  
 Stand girt with many a tower ;  
 Nor where the Hellespont his broad wave spreads ;  
 Nor the firm bastion's rampired might,  
 Whose foot the deep Propontis laves ;  
 Nor those, that glorying in their height  
 Frown o'er the Pontic sea, and shade his darkened waves.

*Strophe 2.*

Each sea-girt isle around  
 Bowed to this monarch : humbled Lesbos bowed ;  
 Paros, of its marble proud ;  
 Naxos with vines, with olives Samos crowned :  
 Him Myconus adored :  
 Chios, the seat of beauty ; Andros steep,  
 That stretches o'er the deep

To meet the wat'ry Tenos ; him each bay  
 Bound by th' Icarian sea,  
 Him Melos, Gnidus, Rhodes confessed their lord :  
 O'er Cyprus stretched his sceptred hand :  
 Paphos and Solos owned his power,  
 And Salamis, whose hostile strand,  
 The cause of all our woe, is red with Persian gore.

*Antistrophe 2.*

E'en the proud towns, that reared  
 Sublime along th' Ionian coast their towers,  
 Where wealth her treasures pours,  
 Peopled from Greece, his prudent reign revered.  
 With such unconquered might  
 His hardy warriors shook th' embattled fields,  
 Heroes that Persia yields,  
 And those from distant realms that took their way,  
 And wedged in close array  
 Beneath his glittering banners claimed the fight.  
 But now these glories are no more ;  
 Farewell the big war's plumed pride :  
 The gods have crushed this trophied power,  
 Sunk are our vanquished arms beneath th' indignant tide.

## XERXES, CHORUS.

XERXES. Ah me, how sudden have the storms of fate,  
 Beyond all thought, all apprehension, burst  
 On my devoted head ! O Fortune, Fortune !  
 With what relentless fury hath thy hand  
 Hurl'd desolation on the Persian race ;  
 Woe unsupportable ! The tort'ring thought  
 Of our lost youth comes rushing on my mind,  
 And sinks me to the ground. O Jove, that I  
 Had died with those brave men that died in fight !

CHOR. O thou afflicted monarch, once the lord  
Of marshalled armies, of the lustre beamed  
From glory's ray o'er Persia, of her sons  
The pride, the grace, whom ruin now hath sunk  
In blood ! Th' unpeopled land laments her youth  
By Xerxes led to slaughter, till the realms  
Of death are gorged with Persians ; for the flower  
Of all the realm, thousands, whose dreadful bows  
With arrowy shower annoyed the foe, are fall'n.

XER. Your fall, heroic youths, distracts my soul.

CHOR. And Asia sinking on her knee, O king,  
Oppressed, with griefs oppressed, bends to the earth.

XER. And I, O wretched fortune, I was born  
To crush, to desolate my ruined country.

CHOR. I have no voice, no swelling harmony,  
No descant, save these notes of woe,  
Harsh, and responsive to the sullen sigh,  
Rude strains, that unmelodious flow,  
To welcome thy return.

XER. Then bid them flow, bid the wild measures flow,  
Hollow, unmusical, the notes of grief ;  
They suit my fortune, and dejected state.

CHOR. Yes, at thy royal bidding shall the strain  
Pour the deep sorrows of my soul ;  
The sufferings of my bleeding country plain,  
And bid the mournful measures roll.  
Again the voice of wild despair  
With shrilling shrieks shall pierce the air ;  
For high the god of war his flaming crest  
Raised, with the fleet of Greece surrounded,  
The haughty arms of Greece with conquest blest,  
And Persia's withered force confounded,  
Dashed on the dreary beach her heroes slain,  
Or whelmed them in the darkened main.



XER. To swell thy griefs ask every circumstance.

CHOR. Where are thy valiant friends, thy chieftains where?  
Pharnaces, Susas, and the might  
Of Pelagon, and Dotamas? The spear  
Of Agabatas bold in fight?  
Psammis in mailed cuirass drest,  
And Susiscanes' glittering crest?

XER. Dashed from the Tyrian vessel on the rocks  
Of Salamis they sunk, and smeared with gore  
The heroes on the dreary strand are stretched.

CHOR. Where is Pharnuchus? Ariomardus where,  
With every gentle virtue graced?  
Lilæus, that from chiefs renowned in war  
His high-descended lineage traced?  
Where rears Sebalces his crown-circled head?  
Where Tharybis to battles bred,  
Artembares, Hystæchmes bold,  
Memphis, Masistres sheathed in gold?

XER. Wretch that I am! These on th' abhorred town  
Ogygian Athens, rolled their glowing eyes  
Indignant; but at once in the fierce shock  
Of battle fell, dashed breathless on the ground.

CHOR. There does the son of Batanochus lie,  
Through whose rich veins th' unsullied blood  
Of Susamus, down from the lineage high  
Of noble Mygabatas flowed:  
Alpistus, who with faithful care  
Numbered the deepening files of war,  
The monarch's eye; on the ensanguined plain  
Low is the mighty warrior laid?  
Is great Æbares 'mongst the heroes slain,  
And Partheus numbered with the dead?  
Ah me! those bursting groans deep-charged with woe  
The fate of Persia's princes show.

XER. To my grieved memory thy mournful voice,  
Tuned to the saddest notes of woe, recalls  
My brave friends lost ; and my rent heart returns  
In dreadful symphony the sorrowing strain.

CHOR. Yet once more shall I ask thee, yet once more,  
Where is the Mardian Xanthes' might,  
The daring chief, that from the Pontic shore  
Led his strong phalanx to the fight?  
Anchaes where, whose high-raised shield  
Flamed foremost in th' embattled field?  
Where the high leaders of thy mail-clad horse,  
Däixis and Arsaces where?  
Where Cigdagatas, and Lythimnas' force,  
Waving untired his purple spear?

XER. Entombèd, I saw them in the earth entombèd ;  
Nor did the rolling car with solemn state  
Attend their rites : I followed : low they lie,  
Ah me, the once great leaders of my host  
Low in the earth, without their honours lie.

CHOR. Oh woe, woe, woe ! Unutterable woe  
The demons of revenge have spread ;  
And Até from her drear abode below  
Rises to view the horrid deed.

XER. Dismay, and rout, and ruin, ills that wait  
On man's afflicted fortune, sink us down.

CHOR. Dismay, and rout, and ruin on us wait,  
And all the vengeful storms of fate :  
Ill flows on ill, on sorrows sorrows rise ;  
Misfortune leads her baleful train ;  
Before th' Ionian squadrons Persia flies,  
Or sinks ingulfed beneath the main :  
Fall'n, fall'n is her imperial power,  
And conquest on her banners waits no more.

XER. At such a fall, such troops of heroes lost,

How can my soul but sink in deep despair !  
Cease thy sad strain.

CHOR. Is all thy glory lost ?

XER. Seest thou these poor remains of my rent robes ?

CHOR. I see, I see.

XER. And this ill-furnished quiver ?

CHOR. Wherefore preserved ?

XER. To store my treasured arrows.

CHOR. Few, very few.

XER. And few my friendly aids.

CHOR. I thought these Grecians shrunk appalled at  
arms.

XER. No : they are bold and daring ; these sad eyes  
Beheld their violent and deathful deeds.

CHOR. The ruin, say'st thou, of thy shattered fleet ?

XER. And in the anguish of my soul I rent  
My royal robes.

CHOR. Woe, woe !

XER. And more than woe.

CHOR. Redoubled, threefold woe !

XER. Disgrace to me,  
But triumph to the foe.

CHOR. Are all thy powers  
In ruin crushed ?

XER. No satrap guards me now.

CHOR. Thy faithful friends sunk in the roaring main.

XER. Weep, weep their loss, and lead me to my house ;  
Answer my grief with grief, an ill return  
Of ills for ills. Yet once more raise that strain  
Lamenting my misfortunes ; beat thy breast,  
Strike, heave the groan ; awake the Mysian strain  
To notes of loudest woe ; rend thy rich robes,  
Pluck up thy beard, tear off thy hoary locks,  
And bathe thine eyes in tears : thus through the streets

Solemn and slow with sorrow lead my steps ;  
Lead to my house, and wail the fate of Persia.

CHOR. Yes, once more at thy bidding shall the strain  
Pour the deep sorrows of my soul ;  
The suffering of my bleeding country plain,  
And bid the Mysian measures roll.  
Again the voice of wild despair  
With shrilling shrieks shall pierce the air ;  
For high the god of war his flaming crest  
Raised, with the fleet of Greece surrounded,  
The haughty arms of Greece with conquest blest,  
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